

Inclusive Education Aspirations:
Exploration of Policy and Practice in
Bangladesh Secondary Schools

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Muhammed Mahbubur Rahaman

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Dedication

To the two most influential women of my life who
inspired me to make a difference

My Mother- *Jahanara Islam*- who always thinks I am
just a kid

And

My Wife – *Rashida Akter*- who had the toughest job.
Looking after our two hyperactive little angels
(*Tepantor* and *Rupantor*) during my PhD study

Acknowledgments

“Life is a self-renewing process through action upon the environment”

(Dewy, 1926, p.2).

My doctoral journey was not straightforward. It was an epic journey with new challenges, with new possibilities and interpretations. The task was similar to the mission of indefinite self-renewal and was dependent upon the existence of several individuals.

My original inspiration came from the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh, *Banghabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman*, who said in an address on January 24, 1971, “Without cultural freedom, political and economic freedom is valueless. Thus, literature and culture of Bangla should be based on the soil and with people focusing on their happiness, peace, dreams and expectations.” Therefore, my aspiration was to search for a contextualised culturally responsive approach to inclusive education. It seemed to me that inclusive education should accommodate the concept of ‘social justice’, which was the spirit of Bangladesh’s independence. Any imperial mimicking of inclusive education would not be realistic, without pledging to the high ideals of nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism - the fundamental principles of the *Constitution of the Republic*. The essence of inclusive education should be ‘Every individual is different, we need to embrace diversity’.

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¹ The Maori word ‘Rohe’ means ‘boundary’

² Meaning “the real kinsman”

³ Means ‘Love’

⁴ Means ‘Grandson’

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A realisation from my research journey is that “Life covers customs, institutions, beliefs, victories and defeats, recreations and occupations” (Dewy, 1926, p.2), and education is “a continuous reconstruction or reorganizing of experience” (Dewy, 1926, p.376). Because one cannot drink up the entire ocean, one can only drink to one’s limit. I worked my level best to produce quality work, but at all times, I remembered, “In seeking the way to perfection, a person may encounter a master and accept him/her [*Janinka* and *Dean*] with heart and soul as a guide and teacher. When one find’s such a master, one devotes oneself to him in order to win his/her attention”. Now, it seemed to me that I found such Guru [*Janinka* and *Dean*], as I have had a remarkable period of intense learning, not only in the academic arena, but also on a personal level.

All the best!

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Abstract

In accordance with global policies and pressures Bangladesh has incorporated inclusion as a change agenda in its education system and has consequently legislated a number of policies supporting inclusive education for children with disabilities in mainstream education. Secondary schools in Bangladesh are gradually initiating inclusive teaching and learning approaches to respond to the significant shifts in policy. This research examines the relationships between global pressures, national policies for the inclusion of children with disabilities and the aspirations, practices and needs in secondary schools in Bangladesh. In particular, it examines political rhetoric concerning valuing diversity within Bangladesh and juxtaposes this rhetoric with case studies of the practice of five selected schools. There is very little comprehensive research in this field in Bangladesh, so this project encompasses an exploration and review of policy and of policy context as well as an exploration of the grounded realities of education practices. It addresses the main research question: *How do Bangladesh's current policies for students with disabilities in secondary schools align with practice, resources and perceived needs?*

The study utilised a qualitative case study methodology. The overarching case is that of inclusive education in Bangladesh. Within this, there are a number of embedded cases examining the practices of particular schools and the perspectives of policymakers. The study was conducted in two stages. The first stage was designed to get information on policy from documents and interviews with professionals including academics, teacher educators, policy administrators, policymakers, and education policy experts. The purpose of this phase was to investigate the policy options for educating children with disabilities in mainstream/inclusive setting and to understand the influences of global policies on Bangladesh policies and legislation. The second phase involved case studies of five selected secondary schools to investigate how such policies are translated into practices.

The study identified a gap between policies and practices that arose from the dominant influence of international drivers as well as the lack of strategic implementation processes. The findings from the study lead to the conclusion that schools were claiming to be implementing inclusive education despite their teachers having not received training in inclusive educational practices or having sufficient resources. As a consequence staff were often unaware of how to meet the needs of students with disabilities and of how to integrate them into class. It further identified the range of challenges that still exist.

The findings are significant for the Bangladesh context as the country strives to achieve the goal of inclusive education, and as a contribution to the wider debates of inclusion and inclusive education practices. Their implications are discussed in relation to further policy formation and to the development of strategies and resources for improving teaching learning practices in inclusive classrooms. The thesis concludes that the road to inclusion for Bangladesh secondary schools may well have begun but it requires further reformation of not only schools but also national strategies of policy development.

Abbreviations

AC	: Academic
ADB	: Asian Development Bank
AS	: Assessment Specialist
ASD	: Autism Spectrum Disorders
B.Ed	: Bachelor of Education
BANBEIS	: Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BBS	: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BGD	: Bangladesh
BISE	: Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education
BNHRC	: Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission
BPDWA	: The Bangladesh Persons with Disabilities Welfare Act
CAMPE	: Campaign for Popular Education
CBR	: Community-Based Rehabilitation
CEDAW	: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIDA	: Canadian International Development Agency
CPD	: Continuous Professional Development
CPE	: Compulsory Primary Education
CPEA	: Compulsory Primary Education Act
CRC	: Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSID	: Centre for Services and Information on Disability
CSIE	: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education
CWDs	: Children with Disabilities
DRCSEP	: Disability related Combined Special Education Policy
NFEA	: Non-formal Education Act
EFA	: Education for All
ERHEC	: Educational Research Human Ethics Committee
ESD	: Education for Sustainable Development
FTI	: Fast Track Initiative
FY	: Fiscal Year
G-1	: Government Official One
G-2	: Government Official Two

GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product
GED	:	General Economic Division
GoB	:	Government of Bangladesh
GPA	:	Grade Point Average
HSC	:	Higher Secondary Certificate
ICT	:	Information Communication Technology
IDEA	:	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IE	:	Inclusive Education
IEPs	:	Individualised Education Plans
IEPSE	:	Inclusive Education Policy for Secondary Education
IN	:	International Non-Government Organisation Expert
INGO	:	International Non-Government Organisation
JICA	:	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JSC	:	Junior Secondary Certification
M.Ed	:	Master of Education
MDGs	:	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	:	Ministry of Education
MoSW	:	Ministry of Social Welfare
MoWCA	:	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
MP	:	Member of Parliament
MPO	:	Monthly Payment Order
NCTB	:	National Curriculum and Text Board
NDD	:	Neuro-Developmental Disabilities
NDDPTA	:	Neuro-Developmental Disability Protection Trust Act
NE	:	National NGO Expert
NEP	:	National Education Policy
NFOWD	:	National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled
NGO	:	Non-Government Organisation
NICTP	:	National ICT Policy
NPA	:	National Education for All Plan of Action
NSDS	:	National Sustainable Development Strategy
NWDP	:	National Women Development Policy
NZ	:	New Zealand

PE	:	Policy Expert
PEDP	:	Primary Education Development Program
PhD	:	Doctor of Philosophy
PSSIE	:	Perceived School Support for Inclusive Education
PTA	:	Parent-Teacher Association
RPPDA	:	Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act
SDG	:	Sustainable Development Goals
SMC	:	School Managing Committee
SNET	:	School Nuclear Education Team
S-Ride	:	Students Ride
SSC	:	Secondary School Certificate
SWDs	:	Students with Disabilities
TE	:	Teacher Educator
TK	:	Taka (Bangladesh currency)
TQI	:	Teaching Quality Improvement
TQI-SEP	:	Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project
UIS	:	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	:	United Nations
UNCED	:	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCRPD	:	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	:	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNPAN	:	United Nations Public Administration Network
USA	:	United States of America
USD	:	United States Dollar
WB	:	World Bank
WCED	:	World Commission on Environment and Development
WHO	:	World Health Organisation

Chapter One

Introduction

*If humans do not care
About humans at all
With a bit of sympathy
Who else will care? Say o mate!
... If any weakling fords
The raging torrents of life
Clinging to your pluck
What will you lose? Say o mate!*

[Hazarika, 1961/ trans. N. N. Thakuria, 2011, p.132, as cited in Dutta, 2013, p.454].

The above famous subcontinental song “মানুষ মানুষের জন্য, জীবন জীবনের জন্য”⁵ by the lyricist and musician Dr Bupen Hazarika asked people not to turn against each other at critical crossroads and called for building the future in the light of humanity against oppression and subjugation in society. As many children with disabilities are deprived of access to education, Hazarika’s call encourages reform of the education system to achieve a more humanistic approach. Critical theorist Greenwood stated that "Change is a constant in our lives, whether we welcome it or resist it, whether we seek to shape it or simply plan to survive it" (2013, p.35). The need for change in the Bangladesh education system, and in approaches to inclusive education in particular, has become obvious in order to keep pace with global developments in education. Thomas, Walker and Webb (2005, p.22) described *inclusive education* as a philosophy and a strategy for describing, identifying, and indexing the ethos and practice of education as an international agenda to include every child in schools. In accordance with global development, Bangladesh has incorporated *inclusion* as a *change agenda* in its education system (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2010) and consequently legislated a number of policies supporting inclusive education for including children with disabilities in mainstream education. The form of research has been used to examine the extent to which those policies match with the aspirations, practices and needs in secondary schools in Bangladesh for the inclusion of children with disabilities. Moreover, case study approach has been employed the the potential

⁵ [Mānuṣa mānuṣēra jan'ya, jībana jībanēra jan'ya] /Trans. *People are for people, life is for life.*

alignments, conflicts and tensions between policy and practices of inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools. In particular, it examines political rhetoric concerning valuing diversity within Bangladesh and juxtaposes this rhetoric with case studies of the practices of five selected schools. There is very little comprehensive research in this field in Bangladesh, so this project encompasses an exploration and review of policy and the understandings of policy context as well as an exploration of the grounded realities of education practices.

An overview of the concept of inclusive education and my position

Mitchell (2014) argued that inclusive education is a “mega strategy” (p.298) that is more than mere placement for educating children with disabilities in mainstream education settings. However, he acknowledged that the central feature of inclusive education “is the placement of learners with special educational needs in age-appropriate regular classrooms in the learner’s neighbourhood school” (p.302). The fundamental principle of inclusion as described in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) is to “work towards ‘*schools for all*’- institutions which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs” (p. iii). In this connection, regular schools need to ensure “*effective education*” with required extra support to educate children with disabilities (UN, 2006, Article 24d).

Even though inclusive education has been initiated in many countries, the word *inclusive education* has been defined and interpreted differently, as it is, however, important to discuss the position this study has taken and the definition of inclusion and inclusive education that has influenced the entire research. The term *inclusive education* in this study is used in the context of Bangladesh and I consider *inclusive education* from the perspectives of *children with disabilities* to be educated in the *mainstream schools* with necessary supports that is comparable to the *index for inclusion* (Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan & Shaw, 2000) and guided by the UNESCO's (2001) “nine golden rules” of inclusive education (p.74). Considering the Bangladesh context including legal and constitutional commitments, an analytic lens of an inclusionary vision as the principle of creating equal opportunities for all children in mainstream education was used.

Purpose and focus of the research

Secondary schools in Bangladesh are embarking on inclusive teaching and learning approaches to respond to the significant shifts in policy to embrace children with disabilities in the classroom. I examine in this study how secondary schools are keeping up with the pace of such

changing focus on inclusive philosophy and the challenges that have emerged as a consequence of such a shift.

The focus of this study was concentrated on understanding the grounded complexities that were involved in the implementation of inclusive education for secondary students with disabilities. As described in detail in Chapter Three, which details the methodology, the study was conducted in two stages. The first stage was designed to get information on policy from documents and interviews with professionals including academics, teacher educators, policy administrators, policymakers, and education policy experts. The purpose of this phase was to investigate the policy options for educating children with disabilities in mainstream settings. Moreover, this phase was targeted to understand the influences of global policies on Bangladesh policies and legislation in regard to inclusive education. The second phase of this research involved case studies of five selected secondary schools to investigate how such policies are translated into practices. The case studies present specific practices of schools and such practices were diversified, and varied from school to school.

One of the major focuses of this study was to explore context-based practices as well as identify enduring challenges and paradoxes in implementing policies for educating children with disabilities. Drawing on contextual views of the importance of inclusion, this research focused on how teachers and parents experience the inclusive education policy in Bangladesh that has been formulated by the influence of globalisation. From this focus a number of specific objectives emerged, which are: i) to examine the concept of inclusion within education policy documents in Bangladesh; ii) to examine the influence of global policies on Bangladesh educational initiatives towards inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream; iii) to identify and explain conflicts between the global values of *full inclusion* and current trends of inclusion of children with disabilities within the education system of Bangladesh; and iv) to explore examples of contextualised inclusive education practices. A further aim of this research was to provide a voice for those teachers and parents of children with disabilities who were expected to implement inclusive education practices and experiences in their classrooms and schools.

Statement of the research question

My PhD work is built on my earlier research into inclusive education practices for secondary school students with disabilities in Bangladesh. As a teacher educator and special educator, I gained professional experience during the last 12 years of my working in this field of education

and disability. Therefore, my present study examines issues that emerged from my previous study (Rahaman, 2011) related to *inclusive education practices* for children with disabilities.

My beliefs and assumptions about knowledge (epistemology) have shaped the methodology and choice and framing of the research question, as I discuss in detail in the conceptual framework section below as well as in Chapter Three. To achieve the objectives of this research, one main research question and five embedded questions have been formulated. The main research question is:

How do Bangladesh's current policies for students with disabilities in secondary schools align with practice, resources and perceived needs?

Embedded research questions: The following supplementary questions will also be addressed by the research:

- i) What are the government policies on meeting the education needs of students with disabilities in secondary schools in Bangladesh and how do these align with global policies on inclusive education?*
- ii) What are the existing practices of inclusive education in secondary schools for students with disabilities in Bangladesh?*
- iii) How do current policies on inclusive education match with practices in secondary schools?*
- iv) What do parents and educators perceive to be obstacles to meeting the education needs of students with disabilities in secondary schools in Bangladesh?*

Why the research is important

This research is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it is significant for the Bangladesh context as the country strives to achieve the goal of inclusive education, and secondly, it is significant for its contribution to wider international debates of inclusion and inclusive education practices. It is important to continuously develop understanding of the existing debates around inclusion and disability. My intention is to contribute towards development of a basis on which to make judgments and decisions for the education for children with disabilities. Thus this research contributes to the knowledge bank for inclusive education practices and may complement different perspectives and approaches of how to deal with the ongoing global debates in this field.

The dual focus of this research, both on policy and practices, aimed to provide a balanced view on inclusive education practices for children with disabilities. By an extensive review of the literature about inclusion in secondary schools, De Vroey, Struyf and Petry (2015) found that the greatest number of studies focused on the investigation of attitudes towards inclusion and inclusive practice, but a limited number of studies focused on policy issues. Therefore, this study is significant in dealing with both practice and policy issues.

Many developing countries, including Bangladesh, have signed and ratified various global conventions, such as the Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994); the Child Right Convention [CRC] (UNICEF, 1989) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [UNCRPD] (UN, 2006). These conventions place a sole focus on *full inclusion* and imposed legal as well as ethical obligations for moving towards full inclusion. This study seeks to understand how difficult or complicated it may be for Bangladesh to translate these conventions and global policies into practice.

The findings of this study also identified some operational strategies for implementing inclusive education and supporting the learning of children with disabilities in schools and classrooms. It sought to understand the needs of teachers and students in practice, and to explore existing gaps within inclusive education practices. The findings of this study provide information about what is still needed in the process of including children in Bangladesh schools.

It is evident that the road to inclusion is not an easy one for developing countries, because inclusive education is about reforming entire education systems. Charema (2010) compared isolated inclusion initiatives to “raising an umbrella against a storm” (p.87). There are financial and policy constraints and movement towards inclusion encompasses change of attitudes, adjustment of societal values, modifications in teachers’ professional development processes and finally, reformation of schooling systems. I was concerned with examining the reasonableness of reforming schools towards more inclusion for students with disabilities, especially from the perspective of developing countries.

The overall plan of how I approached the research

As it is detailed in Chapter Three, this research is primarily a qualitative case study of inclusive education in Bangladesh. Within this there are a number of embedded cases that include five schools and the relevant policy planning. Because there is very little foundational research about inclusive education in Bangladesh I needed to take a broad-based approach to this

investigation. Therefore I employed a qualitative methodological approach. Some quantitative data from existing school records is also included to support contextual descriptions (e.g., numbers of students, teachers and other basic demographic information about each school).

The study has two main focus areas that are interconnected and interdependent. The first focus is to investigate the policy issues of inclusive education, and this is addressed through the analysis of documents and interviews with teacher educators, development activists, senior education administrators, policymakers and senior Bangladesh academics in the field of education for children with disabilities. In analysing policy documents both from local and global sources, a simple content analysis has been used to explore the actual content of the policies and to assess them within the context to determine if it was a practical suggestion or an idealised recommendation. Thus items in policy texts were arranged in three groups: concrete planning, overarching intention, and reflection of international ideology. The second focus is to investigate specific school practices through individual embedded case studies of five different mainstream secondary schools in Bangladesh. Cases are used to highlight not only the grounded realities of existing practices in attempts to embrace inclusive education, but also allow consideration of how Bangladesh secondary schools could progressively move towards inclusive education.

The selected secondary schools were examined through the lens of inclusion, thus exploring the possibilities and difficulties schools encounter in meeting the policy expectations that mandate that schools should be inclusive for all. Data were collected through a reflective field journal, classroom observations, in-depth interviews with the head teachers, assistant head teachers, teachers, School Managing Committee (SMC) members, students with and without disabilities, and parents of children with disabilities. In addition, separate group interviews with teachers and students were conducted. At the centre of these school case studies is the concept of inclusive education and what the schools do to educate children with disabilities. For a better understanding of the context of each school, each case begins with describing the school, the buildings and its culture.

Accessing schools was challenging, because most of the mainstream secondary schools had no students with disabilities enrolled. Therefore, I utilised a *snowball* approach through my extensive professional networks. I entered each school with a help of a particular gatekeeper. I was careful to gather data from all possible sources. A full description of this process is provided in Chapter Three.

My conceptual framework

The study is underpinned by social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978). As a researcher, I take the view that disability is a social construct (Bunch, 1994) and thus substantially shaped by social values and beliefs, as well as by the surroundings in which we live (Berry, 1995). In this regard, I consider the view of the *World Report on Disability* whose authors argued “disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (WHO & World Bank, 2011, p.4). Within this study a critical framework has been incorporated that originated from critical disability theory to investigate the issues related to disability. I discuss this critical framework in Chapter Three. This framework is used to critique disabling structures within the educational landscape (such as segregated classrooms and inaccessible school environments) and suggests incorporating the voices and interests of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes.

This study draws a conceptual framework on the basis of these theoretical underpinnings, with an aim to provide a better understanding of policy formation and reformation within the education system and relating this to inclusive education practices. This framework interprets inclusive education practices for children with disabilities from two viewpoints: the broader perspective and the school perspective. The broader perspective constitutes macro-level practice, focusing on the government’s position, and the school perspective constitutes the micro-level practice, concentrating on classrooms, teachers and students. The micro-level practices include seven components (accessibility, support services, quality of instruction, teachers’ values and attitudes, interaction with peers, collaboration and partnership, and parental involvement), and the macro-level practices consist of six components (teacher development, curriculum, inclusive values, socio-cultural context, legislation, and policies).

The framework is used to focus on aspects related to education of children with disabilities in a regular school. The underlying belief is that both micro (e.g., school-based practices) and macro-level practices (e.g., national policy-making) are equally important for ensuring a more inclusive system for children with disabilities. The macro-level practices have profound influences on micro-level practices, and micro-level practices are directly linked with effective education delivery for children with disabilities. Thus, both levels are inter-linked and inter-dependent. The importance of cultural contexts and diversity from a constructivist perspective

is acknowledged. The important issue is how teachers and parents engage with students with disabilities for their greater inclusion in the classroom.

The broader global and national contexts

This section outlines the global as well as the local contexts of the study. This is further elaborated on in Chapter Three.

Global context of inclusive education

Inclusion is perceived as a *UN agencies-backed* worldwide movement (Metler, 2000). In the last couple of decades, global as well as inter-governmental entities have acknowledged the importance of moving towards inclusive education for ensuring the rights of children with disabilities in education (Rose, 2010; Slee, 2011; Smyth, Down & McInerney, 2010). As a result, inclusive education has become a prominent international education agenda and is being shaped by multi-sectorial initiatives of several international inter-governmental arrangements. Hardy and Woodcock (2015) claimed that worldwide inclusive education policies are discursively constructed and influenced by neoliberal philosophy. In this respect, global policies continue to influence the governments of various countries to undertake a range of measures to include children with disabilities in general classrooms.

Globally, inclusive education has its roots in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UN, 1948), *World Conference on Education for All* (UNESCO, 1990), the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* [CRC] (UNICEF, 1989) and the *Dakar Framework for Action* (UNESCO, 2000). These commitments towards inclusion were further endorsed by the *Framework of Action on Special Education* (UNESCO, 1994). The *CRC* and the *UNCRPD* as the two most powerful conventions, pressed governments around the world to take necessary actions to eradicate all sorts of discrimination against children with disabilities. Article 4.1 and Article 24 of the *UNCRPD and its Optional Protocol* convey legal obligation on member states to incorporate inclusive education within all levels of their education systems (UN, 2006). Rieser (2012) perceived this provision as both “a challenge and an opportunity” to the nation states all over the world (p.1). In an interpretation of *Article 24*, the authors of the ‘*World Report on Disability*’ (WHO & World Bank, 2011) argued that it became the responsibilities of the member states to pledge inclusive education with reasonable accommodation and individual support services to facilitate education for children with disabilities.

For the last two decades a new debate has intensified around the global trend of inclusive education and divided the arena of special education into two schools of thought, namely full

inclusion and *partial or reasonable inclusion* (Deng, 2010). In this respect, my interest is to see which of the above applications of inclusion might work in developing countries and to explore how actual practices are shaped in regard to these dominant concepts of inclusive education for students with disabilities. The decision yet to be taken in Bangladesh is whether to aim for *full inclusion* or *reasonable inclusion*.

The study context: Bangladesh

This section provides a brief description of the context of Bangladesh and her secondary schools in relation to this research, with a particular focus on recent developments, government policies related to the education system, and education for children with disabilities.

Socio-cultural background of Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a *developing country* with a rich cultural tradition. It is located in the South Asian region with a population of 153.6 million (BBS, 2011)⁶ living in a land area of 145,570 square km. It is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Most of the population (approximately 78%) live in rural areas (BBS, 2011) and depend on subsistence agriculture. As “a new state in an ancient land”, Bangladesh has experienced “recurring political upheavals, natural disasters, dramatic social changes and economic convulsions” (Rahman, Hamzah, Meerah, & Rahman, 2010, p.115) since independence was achieved in 1971. The country has nearly doubled its per capita income over the past decade (GED, 2013) to US\$1,316 (The Daily Star, 2016a). Due to the success of Bangladesh achieving the millennium development goals, especially in the areas of gender empowerment, eradicating illiteracy and continuing social development, the UNDP (2013) has recognised Bangladesh as a role model of development.

The education system of Bangladesh

The origin of today's Bangladesh education system is rooted in the colonial period when the colonial ruler established a system in the 18th century by which the colonial power holders could continue their legacy. However, since independence, Bangladesh has aimed to reform the system, aligning it with the national needs. The present education system caters to over 37 million students and involves many stakeholders (BANBEIS, 2016) and may be divided into five basic categories. These are: secular general education stream; religious based madrasah

⁶ According to the ‘State of World Population Report of 2010’ the population is about 164.4 million (UNFPA, 2010, p.100)]

education stream; technical-vocational education stream; professional education system; and, other education systems.

The general education system is secular in nature and is the mainstream education system in Bangladesh. Based on numbers of enrolled students, the *Alia* and *Qawmi* are parallel religious-based or madrasah education systems, followed by the technical education system. Currently, the mainstream and madrasah education systems are divided into three tiers or stages, namely primary level (grades 1 to 5), secondary level (grade 6 to 12), and tertiary and higher education which is pursued at college and university levels.

Secondary education in Bangladesh

Secondary education in Bangladesh consists of a seven year cycle of schooling comprising three tiers: Junior Secondary (grade 6 to 8); Secondary (grade 9 and 10); and Higher Secondary (grade 11 and 12). Each of these tiers is concluded with a public examination. *Junior Secondary Certification* (JSC) is taken place at the end of grade 8, Grade 10 leads to another public examination *Secondary School Certificate* (SSC), and after grade 12, the *Higher Secondary Certificate* (HSC) examination is conducted. All these examinations are administered by ten *Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education* (BISE) located in the different geographical regions.

Three parallel streams of secondary education (general education stream, madrasah education, and technical and vocational education) exist in Bangladesh and are recognised by legislation. These streams adhere to government regulations and follow the national curriculum. All secondary school institutions need to become recognised under the *Intermediate and Secondary Education Ordinance Act of 1961* and its subsequent regulations⁷. Later in 1978, a separate legislation was enacted to govern *Madrasah Education*⁸. Administrative matters are controlled by a separate directorate under the *Ministry of Education*, and curriculum and textbooks are prepared by *National Curriculum and Text Board (NCTB)*. Teachers receive professional development at Teacher Training Colleges and in some Institutes of Education attached to public universities. In addition two further separate streams (*English medium and Qawmi*) also

⁷ See Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division (2010). The Intermediate and Secondary Education Ordinance, 1961 (East Pakistan Ordinance No. XXXIII). Retrieved from http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/pdf_part.php?id=318. Note. This ordinance was further amended in 1977 through the Ordinance No. XVII of 1977 and termed as [Intermediate and Secondary Education \(Amendment\) Ordinance, 1977](#)

⁸ The [Madrasah Education Ordinance, 1978](#); further amended by the Madrasah Education Amendment Act, 2006 (Act No. XLIV of 2006), available at http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/print_sections_all.php?id=566

provide secondary education. This current study is limited to the general stream of secondary education from grade 6 to 10 in Bangla medium schools.

Bangladesh inclusive education policies for educating children with disabilities

A detailed discussion of the available Bangladesh policies, and their implications for the education for children with disabilities is presented in Chapter Four. This section presents an overview to sketch out the policy context of the study.

Local legislation and policies: Inclusion is a dominant tenet of the reformation of the Bangladesh education system. Considered in the light of the poverty in Bangladesh, not a great deal of resources have been allocated to educating children with disabilities since independence. As a result, inclusive education has not advanced as steadily as it appears in policy reports. Under the latest *National Education Policy of 2010* (MoE, 2010) and subsequent the *Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act [RPPDA] 2013* (BGD⁹) and The *Children Act 2013* (BGD) expects to provide more resources to ensure effective inclusive education, so that all children with disabilities could be included in schools. Another legislation, the *Neuro-Developmental Disability Protection Trust Act [NDDPTA] 2013* (BGD) encouraged the establishment of special schools for four specific types of disabilities collectively known as neuro-developmental disability.

International policies: Inclusive education reform is underway in Bangladesh in response to various international policies and declarations. Three international documents are highly influential in inclusive education in Bangladesh. These are: i) UNICEF, 1989; ii) UNESCO, 1990; and iii) UN, 2006. Bangladesh signed and ratified these UN Conventions which impose some ethical as well as legal obligations on Bangladesh to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream contexts.

The context and reality

This section provides an initial orientation to the secondary school culture and the realities for children with disabilities. In this regard, I have also drawn on my own experiences, focusing on two issues: general school culture, and grounded realities of inclusive education for children with disabilities.

⁹ BGD is the country abbreviation for Bangladesh

School culture

The secondary school culture is evolving with a goal to serve the economy. Whereas national policy speaks to the need to achieve social justice, however, unhealthy competition to achieve the goal of a *Golden A+*¹⁰ has developed over time, with the rise of neoliberal values in education. As a result, coaching and private tuition have become the norm. Examinations are creating a dependency on getting better results rather than meaningful learning. The system is leading to the creation of an examination-based generation, rather than a learning community. Conditions of teaching and learning in secondary schools are perceived as barriers to ensuring quality education. The teacher student ratio [standard is 1: 30] in schools advocated by policy is not realisable; it is actually about 60-70 on average. As there are more students in the class, teachers often report being unable to give the necessary time needed for individual students. The low socio-economic status of teachers makes it difficult for them to put their sole focus into classroom teaching. Because many teachers are not able to support their own family on their wages, they need to undertake after school coaching to supplement their income. Being funded through coaching, many teachers appear to be losing interest in classroom activities. For these reasons, students appear to be dependent on coaching and private tuition to achieve exam success.

Inclusive education practice and disabilities

The above conditions in secondary schools' culture also affect the implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities. The primary limitation arises from negative attitudes of many stakeholders. 'প্রতিবন্ধী' [Pratibandhī], the Bangla word for disability, is negatively constructed as indicating various 'প্রতিবন্ধকতা' [Pratibandhakatā], barriers or obstacles in English. A major concern for teachers is knowing about the types of disabilities and taking steps to address the learning needs. Due a lack of standardised diagnostic tools available in schools, understanding learning difficulties and/ or disabilities among students is problematic. However, due to policy expectations, it might be said that inclusive education has been introduced into secondary schools without proper professional orientation for the stakeholders. Therefore, theoretically, all the secondary schools might now be called inclusive schools. The realities, however, are quite different. Factors like inaccessible physical infrastructures, large

¹⁰ "Golden A+" means students achieved GPA 5 or A+ (that means scores 80 +) in each of the individual paper in a public examination. Though officially it does not exist, Golden A+ is perceived as the best result for an individual student in the public examination (PSC, JSC, SSC, and HSC) in Bangladesh.

numbers of students in a class, untrained teachers, and lack of required resources loom like Mount Everest on the way to inclusion.

Why this study focuses on secondary schools

My professional experiences have led me to conduct research in secondary schools. Back in 2005, when I joined the Bangladesh government service as a teacher educator, I conducted some sessions in an in-service training program for the secondary school head teachers. By sharing experiences, I heard frustrating information about secondary education. Afterwards, I conducted many training sessions for secondary teachers in Bangladesh. The experience of sharing experiences with secondary teachers and administrators encouraged me to focus research in secondary schools.

Most of the existing studies of inclusive education in the Bangladesh context have focused on primary level; few have focused on the secondary level. Primary education became compulsory and universal in 1990, but secondary education is not yet compulsory. However, recent education policy has recognised the importance of secondary education (MoE, 2010). Although systematic inclusive initiatives at primary level had taken place after the EFA declaration in 1990, the systematic inclusive education initiative started at secondary level through an Asian Development Bank and JICA funded project, *Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project* (TQI-SEP), in 2006 and was limited to sensitising activities regarding education of children with disabilities. Official education statistics shows that primary education is much more developed and focused in comparison to secondary education in Bangladesh (BANBEIS, 2016). Therefore, as a secondary teacher educator and faculty member of the department of special education in a Bangladesh public university, I was motivated to conduct research about children with disabilities in secondary schools, in the hope that a stronger foundation of knowledge would lead to greater levels of inclusion.

Language considerations

Why is language an issue for this study? I seek to inform international audiences about my research findings, conducted in a context where people use only Bangla for their day-to-day as well as professional communication. In this respect, Hall (2013) assumed that language represents the greatest obstacle to socially and cognitively oriented projects (p. 414). Another reason is the growing concern about using disability-related terminology (Mullen & Wills, 2016, p.9); especially if it becomes more important when doing research with persons with disabilities.

I identified that various scholars used terminology for disability differently, indicating their different positionalities. Therefore, it seems necessary to offer some explanation of terminology used in this thesis so as to be able to engage with potential readers with different orientations. Two types of terminology are common in studies of disability; the first one is *disability first* terminology (e.g., disabled *children*), and the second one is *human first* terminology (e.g., *children* with disabilities). This issue of terminology is further examined in Chapter Two. Since my focus is on the academic learning of secondary school children, I have generally opted to use *children with disabilities*, unless other terms are used in a specific quotations. However, throughout the thesis, *children*, *pupils*, *learners* or *students* are used interchangeably in accordance with the needs of the specific situation.

As I am presenting my thesis in a language (English) that is not my native language (Bangla), and I conducted the field work in Bangla, three significant concerns about the use of language emerged. These were: i) finding appropriate comparable English term for some Bangla words; ii) the different presentation styles in English and Bangla; and, iii) translating the interviews and observations accounts into English. Schecter and Bayley (2002) recognised language as a cultural practice and explained that choice of language, its pattern for instantiation, are related to socio-cultural and socio-historical contexts. My presentations of concepts in this study are influenced by the Bangladesh socio-cultural and historical context. As culture and language influence human understanding and conceptualisation, I have used some Bangla terms that fit into my study context. For example, the term *tiffin period* is used in Bangladesh schools to denote the *rest and meals break* in the Western schools. I have taken special care during translating the original transcript from Bangla to English. I have discussed details of how this translation was undertaken in Chapter Three.

Another important issue in reporting was the selection of pseudonyms presenting participants (both schools and individuals) to protect their identity and ensure anonymity throughout the thesis. In this case, I carefully chose pseudonyms that are culturally appropriate. For example, as the pseudonyms for the first school, I chose a cultural word *Shibani* that means *Goddess Durga*, with eight hands for performing different tasks, a figure featured in Bengali culture for over a thousand years. As the school is located near an ancient historical site, many myths around *Shibani* were present. Introducing this pseudonym glorified the local culture, as the school was serving in the area as *Goddess Shibani* to empower the women. I took the name *Basanti* that means spring or yellow coloured, to represent the second school which was located in a diverse multicultural region. Usually *Basanti* is a symbol of the festival to the local

inhabitants, and the school is in the centre of all local indigenous celebrations. I chose the term *Damayanti*, which means Beautiful for describing the third school which was located in the heart of the capital. Similarly, *broken patches of cloud cover in the sunny sky*, I had noticed confusion about diagnosis and definition of disability among staff members in one of the schools. Thus, I choose the term Megawati which means she who has a cloud for this school. In the last school, I realised its power of influencing the learners' achievement. I called this school with an ancient Bengali term *Ttajasbita* (in Bangla ত্তজস্বিতা/[ttajasbitā]), which means power, vigour or vitality. In addition, I choose the names describing individual participants that were very much familiar with Bengali culture with a consideration of the tradition of Bangla naming in accordance with gender and religion.

Chapter overview and organisation of the thesis

This thesis is organised into eleven chapters. The first chapter introduces my research project and offers a brief background and an overview of the key aspects of this project. This chapter explains the purpose and intentions of the study, and it also briefly describes the background of and rationale for the study with selected reference to previous research and theorisations. A detailed literature review is presented in the second chapter. This chapter provides the deeper background information of the body of theory and knowledge that has grown out of the available national and international literature and that seemed relevant for my study.

The detail of how this research was conducted is discussed in Chapter Three. This chapter further explains my theoretical and epistemological framework, methodological decisions and research design. It also describes the research process including selection of sites and participants, gaining access to the field, data collection methods and tools, organisation, analysis and interpretation of data. Aspects of rigour and trustworthiness of data are also presented. The chapter also explains the ethical issues considered in the study, and details my gaining of ethical approval.

In Chapter Four, an analysis of local and global policy documents on disability and education has presented. This chapter includes summary and consideration of the core concepts of Bangladesh disability policy, with a particular focus on education. It explores the relationship between the realities for children with disabilities and the expectations created by current policies. In this chapter, a critical analysis of the influence of global policy expectations on local policy has also presented.

In Chapters Five to Nine, five case studies of inclusive education practices in selected secondary schools have presented. Chapter Five, titled *Blind men and an elephant: Teachers*

in the dark about inclusion reports the case of a rural high school's journey towards inclusive education and suggests that inclusive education is comparable to the well-known fable that is famous in the subcontinent: *The Blind Men and an Elephant*. Chapter Six, titled *Beloved community, indigenous values and inclusion with limited resources* reports the inclusive education practices of a Hill Tracts ethnic-based secondary school. The case begins with a general description of the school followed by accounts of two students with disabilities. This case shows how indigenous ethical values could affect movement towards inclusive. Chapter Seven is titled *Inclusion: Reality or make-believe?*, and describes the practices of *Damayanti High School* which is located in the heart of the capital city. This case study demonstrates the gaps that can exist between national policies and the practices within schools. Chapter Eight reports the practices of *Megawati Adarsha High School* located in an industrial town. This Chapter focuses on diagnosis of disabilities and its relation to understanding the learning needs of children in an inclusive classroom. Chapter Nine, titled *Equity behind a closed door* presents the final case of *Ttajasbita School and College* which is considered to be a successful school. This case illustrates how inclusion has taken place within an examination-dominated system by incorporating various technologies to support teaching and learning.

Chapter Ten highlights the potential tensions between inclusive education policies and practices within Bangladesh education system. The data reported and analysed in this Chapter were obtained from ten professional conversations or interviews with identified experts in Bangladesh. These included a policy maker, a politician, a government administrator, an NGO representative, an INGO representative, an education policy expert, curriculum expert, a teacher educator, a senior government official working for the Ministry of Education, an assessment authority representative and a senior academic in the field of inclusive education and disability. In this Chapter, data has been organised the discussions into four categories: contextualising inclusive education, aspirations or intentionality, grounded realities and recommended strategies to move forward.

In the final Chapter titled as *Discussion, conclusion and recommendations*, it has been discussed the main themes that emerged from the previous chapters. It examines the implications and limitations of the findings, makes recommendations for more successful implementation of inclusive education in secondary schools. It also offers suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter includes a review of the inclusive education literature and issues related to the inclusion of secondary school students with disabilities in both the local Bangladesh and international contexts. The chapter is presented in three parts. Part one is based on literature that focuses specifically on the Bangladesh education context, part two considers the conceptual development of inclusive education at an international level, and part three focuses on global and regional contexts and challenges for inclusive education. The relevant conceptual principles the current study are based on are also identified.

In the first part, I discuss local literature to highlight key issues in Bangladesh in regards to inclusion, disability and secondary education in order to provide an initial orientation to the secondary school culture and realities for children with disabilities in Bangladesh, and to provide information about aspirations for, challenges of and recommended strategies towards inclusive education in Bangladesh. Part two focuses on international literature to illustrate the wider concepts, theories, debates and challenges related to inclusive education. Finally, part three reports literature that addresses the global context and its influences on the implementation of inclusive education in developing countries. It also examines aspects of the literature that provide specific practicable directions for embracing inclusive education considering the contextual realities of Bangladesh. Relevant literature is further discussed throughout other chapters.

Part one. Secondary education, disability and inclusion in Bangladesh

Aspirations for inclusive education in Bangladesh

Educational reform and inclusive education in Bangladesh appear to be driven at least in part by international agencies. Ahsan and Burnip (2007) described the influence of three specific international documents on Bangladesh. These were the UNESCO Declaration on EFA (UNESCO, 1990), the Dakar Framework (UNESCO, 2000) and the Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education (UNESCO, 1994). Mullik, Deppeler and Sharma (2012) stated that Bangladesh's inclusive education reforms over the past 20 years were in response to international policies, in particular the UN policies on education. Similarly, Ahsan and Mullick (2013) claimed that inclusive education in Bangladesh was a result of responses to international

commitments to eliminate inequalities in education. They explored the two recent donor-aided projects that endorsed inclusion at primary and secondary level respectively. These were the *Primary Education Development Program* (PEDP) and the *Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project* (TQI-SEP). Ahsan and Mullick (2013) also described collaborations between government and private agencies, mainly non-government developmental organisations, were promoting inclusive education in Bangladesh.

A key aspiration of inclusive education is to reduce discrimination towards children with disabilities in educational contexts (Ahmed & Mullick, 2014; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2011; Kibria, 2005; Peters & Oliver, 2009; Slee, 2013). The pressure to change the existing educational experiences of children with disabilities (primarily characterised by low participation, high dropout and exclusion) has accelerated reform in the education system. UNICEF Bangladesh (2014) argued that the concept of inclusive education has been popularised with a limited understanding of both the supports needed and challenges to be overcome in order for all children to attend school.

Challenges for inclusive education

The challenges to implementing inclusive education in Bangladesh are numerous and multifaceted. UNICEF Bangladesh (2014) conducted a study aimed at understanding the situation of children with disabilities. The study involved reviews of documents, stakeholder meetings with 47 participants, consultation with relevant government agencies, key informant interviews and 11 site visits across the country. The findings outlined the key challenges for inclusive education in Bangladesh as: i) lack of awareness of issues; ii) limited understanding of inclusive education by the relevant stakeholders; iii) inability to meet the needs of children with disabilities in the mainstream school system due to lack of equipment and resources (p.10). The study also reported a relationship between socio-economic situations and the inclusion of children with disabilities, with low-income families more likely not to send their children who were labelled as disabled to school. These findings supported Ahsan and Burnip's (2007) earlier reports that resource constraints in terms of funding for development, teaching materials, and training opportunities were negatively affecting implementation of inclusive education in Bangladesh. This is consistent with reports from Bangladesh school principals.

Bangladesh school leaders have reported a range of challenges to implementing inclusive education. Mullick, Deppeler and Sharma (2012) interviewed school leaders in ten regular Bangladesh primary schools and reported the following challenges: i) issues related to student acceptance; ii) absence of collaboration with parents and community; iii) teachers' resistance

due to limited professional development opportunities; iv) scarcity of required resources; and, v) inaccessible physical infrastructure. Malak (2013) conducted one-to-one interviews with 20 pre-service primary teachers in order to understand their perspectives on inclusion. He reported that most of the participants had a negative attitude towards educating children with disabilities in the mainstream classrooms. Misconceptions about the nature and influence of disabilities and limited knowledge on inclusion were identified as factors supporting participants' attitudes towards children with disabilities. Additional barriers included large class sizes, excessive workloads of teachers, rigid curriculum framework and a lack of experiential learning facilities. A similar study by Khan (2011) investigated attitudes and knowledge of secondary school teachers about inclusive education. Using a mixed method approach with 30 randomly selected Bangladesh high school teachers, she found that overall teacher attitudes were positive towards inclusion. However, limited knowledge, insufficient training, and scarcity of teaching materials were obstructing the implementation of inclusive education in Bangladesh secondary schools. A lack of qualified teachers and difficulty identifying, assessing and supporting students with special educational needs were identified by Kibria (2005) as significant challenges to implementing inclusive education in Bangladesh.

Significant gaps between government policies and school practices were reported by Ahuja and Ibrahim (2002). In a study commissioned by UNESCO, participatory methodologies were used to obtain the views of stakeholders and identify the barriers to implementing inclusive education. They reported that although there were many policies incorporating inclusive education, none explicitly provided any guidelines to support the actual implementation of practices at the school level. The authors claimed that in theory inclusive education was a dominant tenant of Bangladesh education system because, according to policies, all the schools were open for all. However, at the school level, many children with disabilities were excluded or discriminated against. The teaching approaches employed by teachers, in many cases appeared mismatched with the philosophy of inclusive education, for example placing an emphasis on rote learning. Ahuja and Imbrahim (2002) also reported challenges of ensuring functional collaboration among different government departments and ministries to implement inclusive education. Research has also highlighted conceptual barriers to inclusive education in Bangladesh secondary schools. Khan et al. (2013) reported that teachers' knowledge and perceptions were barriers to inclusive education in Bangladesh. When these teacher factors are combined with competitive pre-admission testing, inaccessible infrastructure, and limited resources for teachers, inclusive education may be unrealistic for Bangladesh secondary schools (Khan et al., 2013).

The role of Bangladesh teacher training institutes in supporting inclusive education has been highlighted in several studies. Ahsan, Sharma and Deppeler (2011) interviewed 22 institutional heads of teacher education institutes responsible for pre-service teacher training programmes. They reported that a majority of participants did not think trainee teachers in the training programmes were ready to teach children with disabilities in an inclusive classroom. The authors recommended reforming teacher education programmes to align with the needs of implementing inclusive education. In a study investigating the attitudes and concerns of secondary teacher educators in Bangladesh, Rahaman and Sutherland (2012) reported that a limited understanding of inclusive education created uncertainty among teacher educators in regards to inclusive education. These findings suggest that for inclusive education practices to develop and take hold in Bangladesh, there is a need for development of explicitly targeted teacher training programmes.

Recommended strategies to implement inclusive education

A variety of strategies have been suggested to better align policies and practices to support the implementation of inclusive education. This section reviews reported strategies from a macro or policy level, and a micro or school level. Although these strategies could be applied to the Bangladesh context, there is a need to confirm their effectiveness through gathering empirical evidence.

Macro-level strategies

After reviewing international inclusive education movements, Kibria (2005) proposed an ‘implementation model’ for developing countries with a particular focus on Bangladesh. The model suggests inclusive education could be implemented through seven sequential phases. These phases are: i) raising knowledge and awareness of key people including teacher educators and institutional leaders; ii) ensuring physical accessibility (classrooms, schools and transport); iii) modifying the curriculum to ensure flexibility in meeting needs of children with disabilities; iv) modifying the teacher education curriculum to align with the needs of teachers’ to teach confidently in inclusive classrooms; v) initiating a short intensive programme for all teachers to provide basic knowledge about inclusive education; vi) launching pilot projects to establish model schools in each sub-district; and vii) establishing resource centres in each sub-district to provide support for teachers and students. Although the proposed model is limited to a conceptual level, it provides a roadmap for system reformation in Bangladesh.

A situational analysis study by UNICEF Bangladesh (2014) reported that most initiatives designed to increase the awareness and recognition of rights of children with disabilities at the

government and private level were undertaken in isolation. A recommendation of the authors was for an overall coordination of system reformation. Ahsan and Burnip (2007) also suggested strategies to overcome barriers to implementing inclusive education practices. They reported a lack of resources as a key barrier that could be resolved from international and national perspectives. International development partners and donors could play a vital in developing more “intensive and participatory cooperation networks” linking developed countries and international agencies operating in developing countries (Ahsan & Burnip, 2007, p.69). At a national level, Ahsan and Burnip (2007) emphasised developing cooperation between potential stakeholders, such as government and non-government organisations and also between mainstream and special schools.

Researchers have also advocated for focusing on developing local contextualised strategies as opposed to applying approaches from developed countries to Bangladesh. Ahmmed and Mullick (2014) identified the challenges involved in implementing inclusive education policies in Bangladesh classrooms as multidimensional and requiring strategies that are contextually relevant from the major findings of three doctoral studies. For example, existing pre-service teacher’s development processes appear incompatible with inclusive education. Demographic variables and insufficient school support and lack of resources lessen teachers’ efficacy in inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, non-supportive leadership practices in Bangladeshi schools affect teachers’ intentions to include students with disabilities in their regular classrooms. The centralised and top-down approach of the educational administration and management system produce a state of powerlessness of school leaders and teachers in terms of implementing changes in practice for inclusive education in their schools. Therefore, the authors suggest, contextualised strategies like empowering teachers, parents and students to be decision-makers, confirming teachers’ participation in developing training curriculum and ensuring active involvement of community could reduce some tensions with the implementation of inclusive education.

Similarly, Howes, Grimes and Shohel (2011) argued for the importance of contextual solutions for implementation of inclusive education practices after considering field experiences from two projects in Bangladesh and Laos that focussed on policy expectations for teacher development in inclusive education. They presented a successful group of primary and junior secondary schools that facilitated inclusion of children who were previously excluded from education. They reported that these schools utilised the institutional context to support teachers’ development as opposed to teacher training programmes.

Micro-level strategies

Several researchers have investigated strategies that can be implemented in Bangladesh schools to support inclusive education. Ahmmed (2013) conducted a study involving teachers at 1387 primary schools to develop the “Perceived School Support for Inclusive Education” (PSSIE) (p.337) scale. This tool was designed to measure mainstream school teachers’ perceptions of supports for implementing inclusive education. He reported that teachers perceived a requirement to provide adequate human and material resources to achieve inclusive education in their regular classrooms. Mullik, Deppeler and Sharma (2012) described the importance of school leadership in inclusive education and outlined three leadership strategies: i) activating local authority in terms of supporting inclusion; ii) creating a resource base for institutions; and iii) developing a culture of valuing and understanding diversity. The use of assistive technology was also reported to support inclusion of students with disabilities in Bangladesh and Tanzania (Grönlund, Lim & Larsson, 2010).

Rahaman and Sutherland (2011) investigated Bangladesh secondary teachers’ understanding of evidence-based inclusive education practices and reported few teachers were applying evidence-based teaching strategies in their classrooms. For example, cooperative group teaching, peer tutoring, and relating text with practical experiences. A majority of teachers were using traditional teaching methods. These findings suggest that supporting teachers to develop familiarity and confidence in evidence-based strategies may support inclusive education. A suggested strategy to support teachers, was to disseminate success case-based stories (Rahaman & Sutherland, 2011). Similarly, Malak, Sharma and Deppler (2015) argued that positive strategies were supportive to help teachers adjust their classroom practices. Thus they suggested applying more positive strategies as opposed to using reactive approaches in teaching and learning. In a survey of 738 in-service teachers from Bangladesh government primary schools, Ahmmed, Sharma and Deppeler (2014) explored teachers’ attitudes, efficacy and perceived support for children with disabilities in their classrooms. They reported that the relationship between these variables had a positive correlation with teachers’ intentionality towards the inclusion of children with disabilities.

Disability in Bangladesh

This section provides an overview of the Bangladesh context of disability. In order to illustrate a holistic image, this section presents review findings from two perspectives: general socio-economic perspective and educational perspective. The general perspective focuses on how Bangladesh society perceives disability and the educational perspective describes the education

options available to children with disabilities. The challenges reported by students with disabilities are also reviewed.

Socio-cultural aspects of disabilities in Bangladesh

Persons with disabilities in Bangladesh are a significant population who experience many challenges (CSID, 2002). Throughout history, Bangladesh public perception and understanding of disability has been based on rumour and beliefs, resulting in stereotyping and discrimination (Titumir & Hossain, 2005). According to World Health Organisation (WHO) estimate, 15% of the total population of Bangladesh or about 25 million individuals have a disability (Mitra, Posarac & Vick, 2013). The prevalent rate of children with disabilities (below 18 years old) has been reported as 6% of the population or 3.4 million (DBLWB, 2004, p.2).

Bangladesh children and adults with a disability are more likely to be discriminated in education, employment and income (Tareque, Begum & Saito, 2014). Islam, Bhowmik, Islam, Renzaho and Hiller (2016) reported that social discrimination was experienced more by persons with disabilities with a lower socio-economic status living in the rural areas. Having a *disability* was reported to have a devastating effect on the quality of life of people living in rural Bangladesh (Hosain, Atkinson & Underwood, 2002). The negative consequences extended to their emotional state, educational attainment, marriage, and employment.

An in-depth ethnographic study covering all ten coastal districts of Bangladesh reported the experiences of persons with disabilities with a particular focus of the aftermath of natural disasters (Anam, Khan, Bari & Alam, 1999/2002). The study participants included 200 persons with disabilities, 696 community members, 40 government employees, and 37 NGO officials. Although the study was not education-specific, findings support the understanding of societal attitudes towards persons with disabilities in Bangladesh. The study reported that negative societal attitudes were distressing for individuals and their families and that there is a need for including disability in Bangladesh mainstream development processes. Among participants with disabilities, 76% had no education, and approximately 65% were unemployed. Thirteen percent of individuals with disabilities engaged in begging for their livelihood. Three individual case studies described the frustrating situation that persons with disabilities experienced during a natural disaster. For example, it was reported by one participant that he prayed to die compared to others non-disabled who prayed to survive. Additional data reported included persons with disabilities were not welcomed at the shelter and were unaware of post-disaster relief benefits due to their disability.

The plight of Bangladesh women and children with disabilities has also been reported. Anam, Khan, Ahsan, Bari and Alam (2002) reported a 64% school dropout rate among 310 females due mainly to abuse and bullying. Nearly all (92%) women reported being the victim of physical, sexual and/ or emotional abuse at some point in their day-to-day life. Nearly half of the 120 children with disabilities in Anam, Bari and Alam's (1999) study were engaged in begging instead of going to school. It was reported that families were likely to restrict their social activities and to exploit their disabilities for profitable purposes. Foley (2009) reported a complicated relationship between disability, poverty and policy in Bangladesh. Supporting the argument for legislative ignorance to describe the country's record on disability rights, Rahman (2004) outlined three factors that affected access to rights and entitlements for persons with disabilities in Bangladesh. These were: i) inadequate legal framework and confounding policy support; ii) social stigma and a lack of public awareness; and iii) poor coordination among relevant stakeholders.

There is a need for reliable disability statistics to support development of support programmes particularly in developing countries such as Bangladesh (Fujiura, Park & Rutkowski-Kmitta, 2005). Hill and Rahaman (2013) claimed that a lack of reliable statistics on children with disabilities was a perceived problem to implementing inclusive education in Bangladesh. Information is needed to scope the population and to undertake the necessary educational planning. The primary data of the first-ever *Disability Identification Survey* of Bangladesh in 2013 resulted in an estimated 1.07% (1,647,005) of the total population with an identified disability (Disability Identification Survey, 2013). In contrast, the first *World Report on Disability* noted the prevalence rate of disability in Bangladesh at 31.9% (52,440,000) persons with disabilities on the basis of the World Health Survey, 2002–2004 (WHO & World Bank, 2011, p. 281).

The main reason for the above differences between national and international statistics seem to lie with definitions of disability and specific methodologies for collecting and interpreting data. Moreover, how the measures are applied also seems important. For example, the Bangladesh census reported a low rate because it used measures based on a narrower definition of impairments, and it is probable that many of survey designers had little knowledge of disabilities. On the other hand, the high rate shown in the first *World Report on Disability* was based on wider perspectives of disability. It considered the national census and survey, as well as two large international data sources: the WHO *World Health Survey of 2002–2004*, and the WHO *Global Burden of Disease study of 2004* to estimate the prevalence of disabilities. In defining disabilities, the report moved from an *impairment* approach to a *difficulties in*

functioning approach (WHO & World Bank, 2011). For example, it included older persons who had significant difficulties in functioning. In some cases, institutionalised populations were included in the estimation process. In few cases, the report even included those people who had activity limitations or difficulties in their everyday lives, and participation restrictions in addition to their impairments (WHO & World Bank, 2011). However, the World report acknowledged the importance of accurate disability statistics to undertake and implement development activities.

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (2015) published a report on the prevalence and pattern of disability in Bangladesh on the basis of data from the *Fifth Population and Housing Census of 2011* followed by the *National Household Income and Expenditure Survey of 2010*. The findings reported that 1.51% of the total population had a severe or acute disability, and the reported rate was higher in the rural areas compared to urban regions. Visual impairment and physical disability were the most commonly reported forms of disability. The report also revealed that disability had a negative effect on marital status, as disability was perceived socially as an impediment to marriage, and among those who did marry, a higher divorce rate was reported. Findings also noted that access to education and income generating activities were much lower for persons with disabilities than their non-disabled peers (BBS, 2015).

Children with disability and education in Bangladesh

Available evidence suggests that children with disabilities have limited presence in educational settings in Bangladesh. Although a UNICEF report estimated that 1.6 million primary school-age children had some form of disability (UNICEF, 2003), approximately 150,000 of those children and young people were actually enrolled in pre-primary (11,272), primary (85,204), and secondary school levels (58,057) (BANBEIS, 2016, p.44). Mitra, Posarac and Vick (2011) created a comparative dataset from 15 developing countries including Bangladesh, and reported that school completion rates was much lower for children with disabilities compared to their non-disabled peers. The National Education Statistics 2015 (BANBEIS, 2016) revealed that only 32% of children with disabilities who completed primary school were enrolled in secondary schools. The Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) and CSID (2002) reported that inaccessible environments, a lack of transport, high opportunity costs, rigid curricula and negative attitudes of families and community members, resulted in approximately 10% of children with disabilities actually enrolling in schools. These figures suggest limited involvement in education for children with disabilities.

Khan and Anisuzzaman (2011) conducted a large-scale qualitative study to analyse the status and experiences of children with disabilities in Bangladesh primary and secondary schools. They reported three categories of education available to student: i) mainstream or inclusive education (i.e., all children in mainstream schools); ii) integrated education (i.e., includes students with mild and moderate disabilities in mainstream schools); and iii) special education (i.e., disabled students in a segregated school system according to the types of disabilities). The authors argued that most children with disabilities could be educated in mainstream schools with reasonable accommodations, but unfavourable attitudes and unwelcoming environments were limiting their access to mainstream schools (Khan & Anisuzzaman, 2011). Lamichhane and Kawakatsu (2015) reported the economic barriers to education for children with disabilities. Parents with greater financial resources were reported as more likely to support the participation of their children in schools. Interestingly, families tended to provide less priority to their children with disabilities when distributing their resources. From a socio-cultural analysis of Bangladesh, the authors reported that “disability is still understood a curse and a burden” (p.101), as most parents did not believe that their children with disabilities could benefit from education (Lamichhane & Kawakatsu, 2015).

Breadth of secondary education in Bangladesh

This section provides an expanded review of the secondary education context and the challenges faced by Bangladesh secondary schools.

Statistics on secondary education in Bangladesh

The secondary school education sector in Bangladesh is significant in terms of people and resources. A recent national educational report noted 10 million students enrolled in 20,297 secondary schools (BANBEIS, 2016). Secondary schools employ 243,117 teachers (25% female) and most schools (77%) are located in the rural areas (BANBEIS, 2016). About 15% of the secondary schools had no electricity connection, and 18% had no computer facilities, however, 73% of the schools had an internet connection. In terms of management, 12% of the schools did not have a management committee meeting in 2015, and 23% of schools had no parent-teacher association (PTA) which was against policy mandate.

The national report also revealed that schools had limited resources to incorporate modern equipment and materials in teaching and learning. Interestingly, 27% of the schools had no science laboratory, with science teaching being limited to textbooks and 72% of schools had at least one multimedia projector to conduct sessions for students. In response to a question about

using teaching materials in addition to textbooks and blackboards, 8% of the schools reported that they had never used any additional teaching materials in the classroom (BANBEIS, 2016).

Goals and challenges of secondary education in Bangladesh

The National Education Policy of 2010 redefined the primary goal of Bangladesh secondary education to either prepare students for higher education or future employment. The primary aims and objectives were described as:

- to help develop learners' latent intellect and comprehensive inner faculties;
- to develop learners with competencies so s/he can compete in the job market, and contribute to the economic sector; and,
- to extend and consolidate the knowledge acquired during primary education to help students acquire a strong foundation of quality higher education. (MoE, 2010, p.21)

Although these goals provided the secondary education sector with overarching guidelines they do not mention students with disabilities. Despite these goals the secondary education systems has a number of challenges (UNICEF, 2003). These include:

- high teacher-students ratio (roughly 1:70);
- chronic teachers' shortage;
- lack of trained and motivated teachers;
- lack of school facilities for learning; and,
- low student-teacher contact hours (the annual contact hours is one of the lowest in the world with fewer than 590 hours).

The teaching approaches used in secondary schools also appear to be a key challenge for the sector. Rahman (2012) stated that "Teachers, in most cases, tend to teach the same things in the same ways they were taught when they were students" (p.3). Habib (2014) highlighted the limitations of secondary classroom teaching in a World Bank-funded study (The World Bank, 2013). These are:

- 'Teacher-centric traditional lecturing' and 'reading textbooks' were the most common teaching approaches;
- Limited initiatives among teachers in attempting innovative teaching approaches,
- Teachers had minimum interactions with students in classrooms;
- Most teachers used questions requiring yes-no responses;
- Many teachers were not aware of subject learning outcomes, or desired student competencies;
- The examination system was the main influence on teaching practice; and,

- Teachers expressed their difficulties in closely monitoring individual students' progress with 60 or more students in their classes.

Lack of appropriate Government attention and issues of funding

The Bangladesh Ministry of Education finance statistics suggest that greater government focus on primary education compared to secondary education (BANBEIS, 2016), as data showed:

- 88.07% of the primary schools were managed by the Government, whereas the government share in the secondary sector is only 1.7% (with 333 public secondary schools);
- That government spends a higher amount (47 % of education expenditure) on the primary level, and 36% on secondary schools;
- Significantly, 18% of the high schools were not covered by the Monthly Payment Order (MPO)¹¹ system and did not receive any government funding.

This apparent lack of funding for secondary schools is perceived as a challenge to increasing the quality of secondary education. The Campaign for Popular Education [CAMPE] (2007) reported very limited funds available for resourcing in Bangladesh secondary schools, for example for purchasing teaching aids, teacher development and academic supervision, enriching libraries and laboratories. No budgetary allocation was available for recruiting adequate numbers of teachers, building required classrooms, or reducing class sizes. CAMPE (2007) recommended reformation of the education funding policy and increase in resource allocations to address the quality issues in schools.

The culture of Bangladesh's secondary education system

This section expands on the previous chapter's introduction of the culture of Bangladesh's secondary education system in reference to literature.

Private coaching, tutoring and guidebooks

Several studies have identified that subject guidebooks, private tutoring, and additional examination coaching had become a common phenomena in Bangladesh's secondary school system (Ilon, 2000; Nath, 2011). Nath (2011) suggested that most students are now dependent on these options for increasing their chances of doing well in examinations, because their

¹¹ MPO stands for 'Monthly Payment Order': a government scheme introduced in 1981 to provide salaries for listed teachers and employees of selected private educational institutions which qualified with Ministry's regulation to be enlisted on the Government Exchequer (Ministry of Education, 2013). According to a newspaper article, the government spends about 50 billion Taka (equivalent to 625 million USD) a year for 470,000 teachers and employees from more than 27,000 MPO-approved educational institutions (Alamgir, 2015).

experiences of traditional teaching-learning are not meeting their needs. However, Ilon (2000) argued that the private tutoring was increasing inequalities in education, as persons with limited finances were unable to access additional resources.

Private tutoring is a common feature of many Bangladesh secondary school students' educational experience. The high prevalence of private tutoring is reported to be in part due to low wages received by classroom teachers (Bray, 2003; Salahuddin, 2011). Bray (2003) reported that teachers were focused on supplementing their teaching wages with additional income from private tutoring or coaching and that some teachers abused their authority by only teaching only half the syllabus during school hours in order to encourage students to attend tutoring sessions for the remaining syllabus. Shafiq (2002) suggested that academic competition among students was fostered by pressure from teachers which in turn supported demand for private tutoring.

The National Education policy of 2010 expressed concern that the growing culture of parents' interest in subject guidebooks, private tuition, and coaching centres were hindrances to the development of a high quality education system. The Ministry's policy indicates that steps will be taken to restrict or penalise people who prepare and distribute subject guides and also against teachers who neglect their classroom responsibilities. The policy also emphasised the need to educate students and their parents about the adverse effects of guidebooks and coaching centres (MoE, 2010, p.60). Similarly, Dang and Rogers (2008) raised concerns that private tutoring or coaching intensified social inequalities and imposed extra costs on families. In 2012, the Ministry of Education circulated a policy called as *Guidelines-2012 to stop teachers' coaching businesses in educational institutions* with the aim of reducing the involvement of teachers in private tutoring or coaching (The Daily Star, 2012).

Issues related to assessment: The myth of the golden A+

An aim of education in Bangladesh secondary schools is to raise students' achievement in internal and external examinations. Purvin (2011) reported that the examination-based assessment system encouraged rote learning and was contributing to raising a culture of unhealthy competition among students. The examination-based system was further criticised by United Nations Public Administration Network [UNPAN] (2003) -

The circus that goes on in the name of public examinations has made Bangladesh a laughing stock of the world. The infiltration of the worst forms of self-seeking and corrupt politics into education is the main cause of failure to control this rot in the educational system. (UNPAN, 2003, p.19).

Debates about the examination systems have also taken place between commentators in Bangladesh newspapers. For example, Azran (2014) claimed the need for a debate about the goal of secondary education and questioned whether the system should prepare students for examinations or for productive and meaningful futures. He termed the examination-based focus as *The myth of the golden A+* and stated that the system was creating immense pressure on students to achieve high grades. In recent times, the number of students achieving A+ grades in public examinations has become a traditional criterion against which to evaluate a school's performances. This culture appears to have contributed to some unethical practices such as the leaking of examination papers (Billah, 2014). A prominent Bangladeshi education scholar, Professor Emeritus Manzoor Ahmed, stated that the public examination at the end of grade 5 and grade 8 was more likely to harm young learners than increase the quality of education (Ahmed, 2015). He criticised the examination tradition of testing students' ability to memorise textbook content rather than develop their problem-solving and thinking skills. He also reported that such high stakes public examinations were encouraging private coaching businesses.

Culture of collaboration among teachers

Collaboration among teaching staff has been reported to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in schools (Mitchell, 2014). Research into Bangladesh teacher practices suggests that teacher collaboration is an area for development. Thornton (2006) conducted a multiple case study research in eight Bangladesh secondary schools to explore the nature of secondary teachers' conversations in the staffroom during their non-teaching periods. She discovered an absence of collaborative conversations to improve teaching-learning and identified four specific characteristics of the school culture that restrained the development of a collaborative culture. These were the curriculum, a culture of blame, teachers' own experience, and economic and contextual constraints. Although collegial support between teachers could improve their teaching, in most of the cases the observed teachers discussed deficits of particular students or even blamed students for their poor progress. Thornton also claimed that teachers had a very little space to initiate inquiry-based learning due to the rigid curriculum. Teachers typically delivered the syllabus so students would learn information without any further inquiry. Low levels of remuneration, limited scope for professional development and a lack of career pathway were reported as demotivating factors for teachers (Thornton, 2006).

Exclusion and high student dropout rates

Bangladesh secondary education appears to experience high levels of student discontinuation and exclusion. Ahmed, Ahmed, Khan and Ahmed (2007) reported that only 20% of students

completed the secondary cycle (from grades 6 to 10). High levels of poverty, physical and psychological characteristics of children, and constraints on policy implementation were stated as the major reasons behind the exclusion and dropout of students from primary and secondary schools. They identified the practice of *virtual or silent exclusion* which means that children are enrolled in and attend school yet experience little engagement in learning activities (Ahmed et al., 2007).

Teacher absenteeism

Intentional teacher absenteeism has been reported as a significant issue facing the Bangladesh education system. Chaudhury, Hammer, Kremer, Mularidharan and Rogers (2004) reported an absence rate of 18% for teachers and principals in high schools. A major reason for absenteeism was to perform assigned administrative/official duties outside of the school. It was also reported that teachers were pulled away from classrooms for a variety of non-teaching related activities by the educational authorities. In addition, teachers who were involved in local party politics as well as teachers engaged in private tutoring as a side occupation were most likely to be absent from school. In most cases, school authorities could not impose any sanctions for their absence. The absence of a regularly-assigned teacher usually involves requesting another teacher to conduct the class on top of his/her existing responsibilities. This practice is likely to affect the quality of students' learning (Chaudhury et al., 2004).

The gap that exists in Bangladesh literature that this study will address

The first part of this review considered research into the Bangladesh education and disability contexts and identified a range of policy and practice level challenges for inclusive education. A majority of this research has been conducted in primary schools, with a limited focus on the secondary education sector. No research has described the implantation of national policies into local practices to support inclusive education in Bangladesh secondary schools. A number of authors suggest strategies to implement inclusive education, but most of the strategies proposed are idealistic, not exemplars of what is already being done. There is also a lack of research describing the experiences of students with disabilities and their teachers in Bangladesh secondary schools.

Moreover, although a significant body of Bangladesh literature has acknowledged the influence of global policies and donor expectations on the commitment to educating children with disabilities in Bangladesh, none of the research had critically analysed such influences. Most of the Bangladeshi authors spent more times in identifying challenges and problems, but very

few of them came up with specific practical strategies that worked in the mainstream classrooms. How the Bangladesh system would embrace inclusive education and how the inclusive education policy framework could be adjusted with a local ideology have not answered by existing research. Few studies include critical analysis of the core concepts of Bangladesh education policy and describe the realities for students with disabilities. None of the research has considered the impact of social and indigenous culture and beliefs system on inclusive education.

Therefore, this study conceptualises the impact of global policy on Bangladesh education policy and explores the resulting complexities in terms of alignments, conflicts and tensions, and it reports teachers' and students' experiences as well as examining social and indigenous influences.

Part two. Concepts and debates about inclusion

This section focuses on the international literature that explores the concepts, theories, wider debates and challenges associated with inclusive education. This review is presented at two levels, namely the conceptual level and the implementation level. The conceptual level that consists of: i) Conceptual complexity in defining inclusive education; ii) Popular definition of inclusive education; iii) *Nine golden rules* of inclusive education; and, iv) Concept of full inclusion and partial inclusion. The implementation level consists of: i) Important factors to consider; ii) Equitable teaching-learning practices; iii) School factors; iv) Importance of context in implementation; and, v) Tensions between *full inclusion* and *reasonable inclusion*.

A. Conceptual level: Conceptual complexity in defining inclusive education

Educators, researchers and policymakers from all over the world have researched and reflected on the concept of inclusion for many years, yet have so far not reached a universal position on 'what does it actually mean' (Erten & Savage, 2012; Hegarty, 2001). This lack of commonly understood definition or meaning hampers research and practices (Epstein & Elias, 1996). The conceptual complexity of defining 'educational inclusion and inclusive education' is therefore open to a variety of interpretations and understandings (Black-Hawkins, Florian, & Rouse, 2007, p.16) leading to confusion and a risk of growing misconceptions around 'inclusive education' (Brown, 2016, Florian, 1998).

Responding to the statement *why having a clear aggregated working definition of inclusive education has been elusive*, Florian (2014) critically reviewed Göransson and Nilholm (2014), and stated that "divergent definitions reflecting distinct but complementary ideas developed

simultaneously in different parts of the world” (Florian, 2014, p.287). Tarr, Tsokova and Takkunen (2012) raised the possibility of the various interpretations of inclusive education even in the same country. Mittler (2000) discussed the immense complexity involved in understanding the phenomenon of inclusive education and the possibility of many strands involved in making a decision about it. Therefore, he conceptualised inclusion as “a vision, a road to be travelled, but a road without ending and a road with all kinds of barriers and obstacles, some of them invisible and some of them in our own heads and hearts” (2000, p.xi).

Many researchers have conceptualised inclusive education differently. Here are some examples. Hegarty (2001) perceived *inclusion* as a “portmanteau of concepts” which is associated with *everyday* meaning (p.247). Farrell (2010) viewed inclusion as “a euphemism for mainstreaming” or “alternative to special education” (p.106/113). However, Brown (2016) found the concept as “complex, multi-faceted and ever-changing” (p.1), whereas Thomas, Walker and Webb (1998) perceived the concept as a *Buzz Word* and “a new set of classroom practice” (p.1/12). Crockett and Kauffman (1998; 1999) presented inclusion as a *political concept* that is perceived by Opertti, Brady and Duncombe (2009) as the means to achieve *Education for All*, or as a “social movement against educational exclusion” (Slee & Allan, 2001, p.177). That is to say, Rapp and Arndt (2012) and UNESCO (2005) described inclusion as “the best possible educational option”, and Black-Hawkins, Florian and Rouse (2007) considered ‘inclusion’ as the “means for addressing the issue of inequality by school systems” (p.8). According to Purdue (2006), it focuses on identifying and removing the barriers in schools (p.12). Watnick and Sacks (2006) stated that inclusive education is about service delivery for special education students in mainstream schools.

A popular definition

According to a popular definition, *inclusive schooling* may be defined as a system that serves all learners effectively in mainstream classrooms with essential supports (Epstein & Elias, 1996; Schrag & Burmette, 1994). Hence, inclusive education “embraces the diverse abilities, aspirations, languages, cultures, beliefs, goals, and needs of all students” (Ministry of Education [MoE], NZ, 1999, p.45). Likewise, Booth (1999) defines it as, “the process of increasing the participation of learners in, and reducing their exclusion from, the curricula, cultures and communities of neighbourhood mainstream centre of learning” (p.164).

Several researchers have perceived inclusion as a dilemma of placement (Kibria, 2005; Pierson & Howell, 2013). For example, Pierson and Howell (2013) defined “[full] inclusion” as

“placement in the general education classroom for all students with disabilities” (p.223). However, several researchers argued that inclusion is more than placing children with disabilities in the regular classrooms (Mittler, 2000; Mitchell, 2014; Odom, Buysse, & Soukakou, 2011). It is all about *schools meeting the needs of all students* (Flem, Moen, & Gudmundsdottir, 2004, p.85). According to Hansen and Morrow (2012), inclusive education should involve an institutional climate and mind set which encourages success for all students. Only true inclusion can be found at schools when “Each child is supported to meet his or her particular needs and to maximise their unique potential” (Alur & Bach, 2010, p.7-8).

Nine ‘Golden Rules’ of inclusive education

In the previous chapter, I mentioned that my position in conceptualising inclusive education has originated from UNESCO’s (2001) *Nine Golden Rules* of inclusive education. The main purpose of the *nine golden rules* is to deal effectively with the diversity in the classroom (Rieser, 2012). These nine *rules* are interdependent and interconnected, as shown in Figure 1. The rules are: i) include all pupils; ii) appropriate communication in teaching; iii) classroom management; iv) lesson planning; v) individualise education plans; vi) provide support to individual students; vii) use assistive devices; viii) behavioural management; and, ix) working together. These rules emphasise the creation of an inclusive learning-friendly environment for all students.

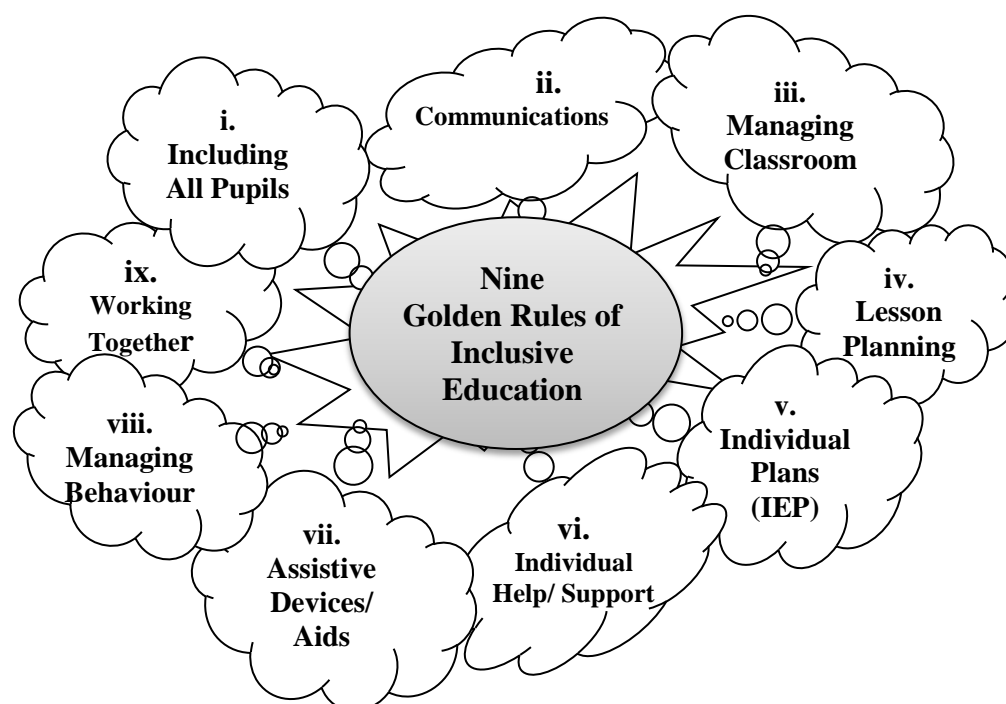


Figure 1. Nine golden rules of inclusive education

Full inclusion and partial inclusion

For the last two decades a new debate has intensified around the global trend of inclusive education (Rayner, 2007). This debate has divided the arena of special education into two schools of thought: namely *full inclusion* and *partial or reasonable inclusion* (Deng, 2010). In this respect, my interest is to see which of the above concepts of inclusion might work in developing countries and how practices are shaped within such dominant concepts of inclusive education for students with disabilities.

Full inclusion

The concept of *full inclusion* proposes that all children are educated in mainstream classrooms (Kauffman & Hallahan, 1995). Brisendine et al., (2008) defined full inclusion as “all students, regardless of handicapping condition or severity, will be in a regular classroom/programme full time” (p.72). Bunch (1994) reported fundamental characteristics of full inclusion as: i) educating all types of children in the nearby regular school; ii) regular teachers taking responsibility for all children irrespective of their level of functioning; iii) valuing individual differences and diversity; iv) resourcing the schooling system for the diverse communities served; v) bringing appropriate support services to a child in the classroom; and, vi) full involvement of parents in the education decision-making process (p.150). According to Hornby (2014), *full inclusion* advocates not labelling a child, and suggests realising children as children, nothing else.

In contrast the concept of *inclusion* involves the provision of additional support services for the child (Smelter, Rasch & Yudewitz, 1994), *full inclusion* implies that regular classroom teachers deal with all students, both with and without special needs and without assistance from others. Differences also reside in numbers, as inclusion means *some* children and full inclusion means *all* children.

Responsible, partial or reasonable inclusion

In contrast to full inclusion, *reasonable inclusion* is seen as a concept that allows for different placements for individuals, thereby reinforcing the need for a continuum of support services (Hornby, 2014). It does not reject the options of special education services, but it provides need-based individualised special educational services (Hornby, 2014). Vaughn (1995) defined *responsible inclusion* as a student-centric school-based education model that allows educational placement and service provision according to the student's needs. Historically, the concept of reasonable inclusion has been reflected in the United States' *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA, 2004). However, this legislation mentioned a clear

preference for educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Students with disabilities could also be educated in a separate special education system when their disability is severe and potentially unmanageable within a mainstream setting (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011a).

B. Implementation level: Implementation strategies for inclusive education

Inclusion is concerned with providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs both in formal and non-formal educational settings. It aims to enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity that is perceived as a challenge and an opportunity for enrichment of the learning environment, rather than a problem (Meijer, 2001). The following sections describes various implementation strategies and pre-requisite conditions for inclusive education.

Important factors to consider

Although several researchers have stated the positive outcomes from implementing inclusive education (e.g., García-Huidobro & Corvalán, 2009, Idol, 2006; Mitchell, 2014; Thomas & Loxley, 2001), Sakiz (2016) claimed that inclusive education is an extremely difficult task for many countries. Therefore, a basic question remains; what are major considerations for the implementation of inclusive education? Meijie (2001) argues that successful implementation of inclusive education depends on addressing the needs of children with disabilities at two levels: both in the classroom and at the school level. Teachers' professionalism (i.e., skills, attitudes and knowledge), materials, quality of instruction and time are the vital pre-requisites at classroom level. On the other hand, school-wide support structures, options and access to special education services, cooperation between school and wider communities are also seen as vital school level elements for including children with disabilities. Bourke and Mentis (2014) claim that successful implementation of inclusive education depends on how responsive teachers are to the needs of all learners. Kuyini and Desai (2007) reported a study based in Ghana that found attitudes and knowledge of educators as well as school leaders were critical factors in implementing inclusive education. They also identified three essential components for inclusive education practices: i) attitudes towards inclusion; ii) knowledge of inclusion; and iii) availability of materials and support for inclusion.

According to Farmer, Riddick and Sterling (2002), students with disabilities can be supported in three broad areas in an inclusive education setting as showed in the figure 2. Personal or individualised supports (e.g., sign language, Braille or modified teaching materials) facilitate

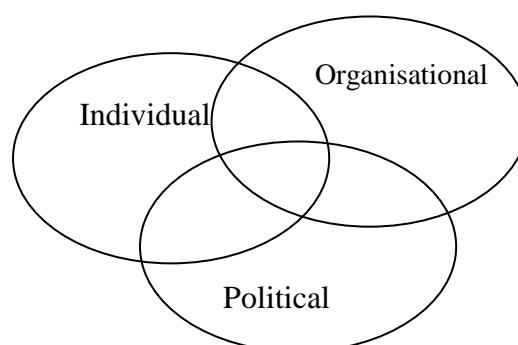


Figure 2. Level of essential supports for inclusion

their learning in the classroom. Organizational supports (e.g., teachers' development) support their retention in the school, and finally, political support reflects in the commitment to equality and access to education for students. Such supports minimise barriers by providing least restrictive environments.

Equitable teaching-learning practices

A number of teaching and learning practices that support inclusive education have been presented in the literature. Examples of these are described here. Knowles (2010) argued that equitable teaching and learning reside in the heart of all-inclusive education practices. Therefore, an important task for teachers is to consider the best interests of children. In a study to determine the outcomes of inclusive science teaching, Mastropieri et al., (1998) suggested that a high level of disability specific teaching skills were essential to promote educational well-being as well as emotional resilience of children in an inclusive setting. George (2005) emphasised the value of differentiated instruction. As a comprehensive approach of teaching, Broderick, Mehta-Parekh and Reid (2005) argued that differentiating instruction supported the successful inclusion of all students (with or without disabilities) in mainstream classrooms.

It is clear that inclusive education depends on what teachers do in classrooms. Teachers often struggle with implementation of curricula in an inclusive setting – even in developed countries. Moen (2008) described a Norwegian-based study in which teachers reported significant challenges in achieving the curriculum's vision of inclusive education. Flem, Moen and Gudmundsdottir (2004) reported that teacher's ability to create a positive atmosphere with good academic oversight could foster effective inclusion.

School factors

A number of school-specific factors have been reported to support inclusive education. In a Netherlands-based study, Van der Bij, Geijssel, Garst and Ten Dam (2016) argued that a secondary school must have two characteristics to be inclusive: “i) learning environment; and ii) guidance and care.” (p.220). Thomas, Walker and Webb (1998) suggested that effective delivery of support was crucial for a school to be inclusive. Black-Hawkins, Florian and Rouse (2007) presented the concept of “full-service school” (p.12) for ensuring the needs of students with disabilities. They argued that schools need to be transformed to meet the needs of every child including students with disabilities, and essential services should be provided in classrooms. Stough (2003) claimed that appropriate service delivery mechanisms could play a significant role in extending the special education expertise for inclusion.

The New Zealand Curriculum emphasises a school’s responsibility in valuing all students’ participation and removal of barriers for their achievement. Schools should therefore be prepared for addressing all pedagogical and extra-curricular needs both for students and teachers to be inclusive (The New Zealand Curriculum Update, 2012). Kozleski, Yu, Satter, Francis and Haines (2015) argue that the development of relationships among students, teachers, and families is an important activity for schools to support in order to achieve inclusion. In classroom settings, teachers’ ability to facilitate the learning environment, and vary their teaching styles to support all students are important variables (Flem, Moen & Gudmundsdottir, 2004; Moen, 2008).

Importance of context in implementation

A growing body of literature on inclusive education states the importance of understanding situational contexts for successful implementation of inclusive education (Dalkilic, & Vadeboncoeur, 2016; Florian, 2014; Johansson; 2014; Kozleski, Yu, Satter, Francis & Haines, 2015; Miles & Singal, 2010; Naraian, 2013; Wah, 2010). Barton (1997) asserted the need for understanding the local context to ensure better outcomes from attempts at inclusive education. In the similar line, Parrilla (2007) argues that inclusive education is needed to be elevated as per specific needs and demands of particular society. A failure to understand or account for the local context could negatively influence the implementation of inclusive education in many countries. Engelbrecht, Nel, Norma and Dan (2015) described how contextual challenges hindered the process of translating inclusive education practices into South African mainstream classrooms. They suggested that the failure to support teachers to develop required knowledge

and understanding about diversity of learning among children was a significant reason for poor uptake and implementation. As a solution the authors recommended a contextual-based teacher training programme. Talley and Brintnell's (2016) Rwanda-based research identified an over-reliance on foreign aid influenced the acceptance of dominant strategies for implementing inclusive education that was not aligned with their cultural context. The authors claimed that ignorance of the local context was the major barrier to implementing inclusive education in Rwanda.

Tension between full inclusion and reasonable inclusion

Even though there is a global trend towards full inclusion there is much debate about whether this is a realistic goal. The following section provides a brief review of the existing debate in regards to full or partial inclusion. Brisendine et al., (2008) conducted a review of the literature and reported that full inclusion was desirable to many educators in developed countries such as the USA. Conversely, many educators in developing countries reported a fear of full inclusion because of the potential influence on their ability to teach. Academics favouring reasonable inclusion argued that for some students inclusive schools may not be appropriate at some stage in their schooling career (Hornby, 2014). These reports illustrate a tension between notions of full inclusion and reasonable/ responsible inclusion.

A global push towards full inclusion has been underpinned by two drivers (Evans & Lunt, 2002). One is to ensure equal rights for all children to be educated in mainstream schools, and another an economic driver. Full inclusion prevents the need for special education, as Farrell (2010) states, "there would be no need for a separate provision in special schools or units because all children would be educated in mainstream classes" (p.105). Thus, full inclusion rejects special education as the identification, assessment, classification of children with disabilities and any distinctive provision. Therefore under full inclusion, every child essentially follows the same curriculum and instructed by same pedagogy, and therapy provision is not actively considered. As Farrell (2010) states full inclusion is about demeaning special education and phasing out of special schools.

Further research has highlighted the challenges that full inclusion presents. Lohrmann and Bambara (2006) reported that full inclusion may affect a teacher's confidence level if supports and resources are absent from the classroom. They suggested that school-wide support and situation-specific support for teachers could help overcome the challenges associated with full inclusion. School-wide support includes the presence of a school-wide culture for promoting

inclusion, and an atmosphere in which teachers can share in open-minded discussion and cooperation with colleagues. The presence of paraprofessionals or special educators to support teachers working with children in classrooms are described as a situation-specific level of support (Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006). Evans and Lunt (2005) reported that a significant obstacle to full inclusion was meeting a wide range of individual needs within a classroom environment. McLeskey and Waldron (2011b) reported a majority of students with learning disabilities who were in full-time inclusive classrooms (with additional resources) made very little academic progress.

Part three. Global and regional contexts and challenges for inclusive education

This section focuses on the context of disability and education from global as well as developing countries perspectives, and explores challenges to implementing inclusive education. The influences of global policies on local Bangladesh policy and the associated complexities involved in realising the goal of inclusive education are considered.

Global context of disabilities and education

Persons with disabilities are the world's largest *minority* (UN, 2007, p.III) and the term itself is "contentious" (Alur & Bach, 2010, p.8). Precise statistics from developing countries are not available (Botts & Owusu, 2013). However, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) (2012) suggests that over one billion peoples (estimated around 15% of world population) are living with disability. It is estimated that 90% of children with disabilities living in developing countries are not attending school (CCS Disability Action, 2013). As these children are part of a family unit, it is estimated that at least 25% of the global population (mostly in developing countries) is directly affected by disability (UNICEF, 2013).

Internationally, children with disabilities experience high levels of segregated institutionalisation, abandonment or neglect (UNICEF, 2013), which create barriers to their education. Research shows that having a disability correlates negatively with school attendance (Ovadiya & Zampaglione, 2009). It is estimated that 93 million children aged 14 or younger (one in 20) have moderate or severe disabilities (UNICEF, 2013). About 35% of school-aged children (an estimated 40 million globally) who are not attending school have a disability (Susan, 2003). Leia and Myersb (2011) stated that disability was the single most important factor in the exclusion of children from schooling in developing countries.

The educational placement of children with disability differs between developing and developed countries. Ferguson (2008) claimed that almost all children with disabilities in

Canada and most children in European countries (i.e., Estonia, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, and Spain) receive their education in general education classrooms. In contrast, the United Nations (2011) reported that most of the children with disabilities living in developing countries (about 90%) were not attending school. Though inclusive education policies have the potential to improve the situation, inadequate government responses to the context are considered a major barrier to ensuring children with disabilities access and participate in education in developing countries (Botts & Owusu, 2013). This has led to educators and policymakers around the world searching for education options that support children with disabilities in education (Mitchell, 2008).

Global influences on inclusive education movements

Humanity is now living in “an increasingly diverse, globalised, complex and media-saturated society” (Shaw, 2009, p. 12). Globalisation is like a broader umbrella effecting or connecting us all socially, culturally, and politically (Alur & Bach, 2010). The concept of inclusive education has been shaped by various global conventions and international policies that aim to increase acceptance of *inclusion* as a preferable way of educating children with disabilities (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2011; Brown, 2016; Mangope, 2013; Miles & Singal, 2010; Mosalagae & Lukusa, 2016; Mosia, 2014; Peters & Oliver, 2009). Spring (2009) reported that reformations of education systems in developing countries were mostly initiated and supported by external influences. Nguyen (2010) expressed concern about the influences of hegemonic ideologies promulgated by global policy frameworks in many countries around the discourse of inclusion at both educational and political levels. Miles and Singal (2010) challenged the international rhetoric on policy formation but recognised the opportunities created by the global policies for delivering quality education to all in developing countries. For example, international commitments such as EFA has accelerated international cooperation among various countries. As a result, bilateral and multilateral donor funding has increased to implement reformation projects in different countries under *The Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI)* partnerships. Extensive international foci on attaining the goals of EFA has accelerated the inclusive education movement. Acedo, Ferrer and P'amies, (2009) explained that inclusive education and EFA were frequently noted as complementary or interchangeable. Similarly, inclusion has been perceived as a core strategy to reach the targets of EFA (Opertti, Brady & Duncombe, 2009). As a result of the EFA movement, many developing countries have accommodated inclusive education in their education policies and opened mainstream schools to children with disabilities.

Global policy influences on developing countries context

Most countries within the Asian region have incorporated inclusion into their national education policies under the influence of transnational agreements (Alur & Bach, 2010, p.xxi). For example, Hong Kong enacted the *Disability Discrimination Ordinance* (Govt. of Hong Kong, 1995) in 1995, followed by the world proclamation of the *Salamanca Statement* (UNESCO, 1994). After the *Dakar Framework for Action* and *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) (UN, 2000), the Hong Kong Government initiated the whole-school approach to integrating students with disabilities into their mainstream schooling system (Ratcliff, 2009). Similar to Hong Kong, inclusive education in India was heralded by two international projects (1999-2005) funded by a development partner [CIDA] (Alur & Bach, 2010). Indian commitment to several international initiatives on inclusive education recognised *inclusion* as a driving policy force for India's education system (Singhal, 2006). By signing international agreements (e.g., the *Salamanca Statement*), India agreed to educate all children with disabilities in regular schools with no discriminatory segregation. However many public schools are not yet open to and continue to exclude students with disabilities entirely or segregate them without appropriate services when they are admitted (Jha, 2007). These reports suggest that signing international agreements does not necessarily result in obligations being achieved.

There is evidence of politics playing a role in post-signing adoption of international policies by developing countries. As an example, a Nigerian case was examined by Eskay and Oboegbulem (2013). Following the EFA (UNESCO, 1990), in 1993 the Nigerian Government [military-based] made a decree to establish a provision of inclusive education with a clear and comprehensive legal protection. Unfortunately, the decree failed because resources were not allocated to support its implementation. As a result, inclusive education remained a mostly theoretical construct and did not result in significant changes to practice (Eskay & Oboegbulem, 2013).

Other African contexts reflect a similar picture. Bartlett (2010) described the Namibian context and examined the appropriateness of inclusive education policies for their local needs. The study highlighted differences between local initiatives and the vision described in global policies. Despite Namibia's adoption of international covenants and educational policy initiatives, findings described that children with disabilities continued to be overwhelmingly excluded from school (Bartlett, 2010). Similar issues were identified by Anthony (2011) in

Ghana, with conflict between the intention of international policies and local interpretation and implementation.

Challenges to implement of inclusive education in the developing countries

Implementing inclusive education policies and practices for children with disabilities in developing countries involves many challenges. According to Charema (2010) a lack of financial and human resources are the two major challenges that developing countries must overcome in order to implement inclusive education. In addition Charema (2010) identified large size classes, lack of public awareness, and unrealistic implementation initiatives as additional obstacles. A lack of political will to make inclusion a reality is also evident in developing countries. Botts and Owusu (2013) argued that inadequate government responses to the context were main problems standing in the way of inclusive education in developing countries. Wu-Tien, Ashman and Yong-Wook (2008) reported slower uptake of initiatives towards inclusive education for children with disabilities in the Asia Pacific region. Forlin (2011) identified negative beliefs about persons with disabilities, limited training of teachers, non-inclusive societies and a lack of flexibility in models of inclusion, as challenges to implementing inclusive education in the region.

Despite some contextual differences, fundamental problems appear similar in developing and developed countries in terms of implementing inclusive education. This is illustrated by comparing the experiences reported in India (Singal, 2010) and Cyprus (Symeonidou, 2011). Although significant contextual differences exist between India and Cyprus, the education systems are similar in various ways. For example, there is a dual and parallel system of inclusive and special schooling, a predominance of the medical model of disability, conceptual ambiguity surrounding disability and inclusion, special schools were perceived as vital for developing students' vocational skills, insufficient teacher development opportunities, and a lack of confidence among teachers in teaching students with disabilities (Singal, 2010; Symeonidou, 2011). Developing European countries also reflect similar experiences. Unianua (2012) reported the major obstacles to implementing inclusive education in Romania were lack of teacher knowledge and confusion among teachers regarding the differences between inclusive and integrated education.

Conclusion

The inclusive education literature reviewed from developed and developing countries provided a balanced conceptual understanding of inclusive education. The review revealed that a

significant number of children with disabilities were not attending schools in developing countries such as Bangladesh. Governments around the world have signed international agreements to foster inclusive education, yet many challenges exist to implementing and resourcing inclusive education practices in both developing and developed countries. The reviews highlights that the road to inclusive education for Bangladesh schools is unlikely to be smooth or short. Therefore there is a need to conduct further research to determine how teachers and schools are coping, or intend to cope, with the diversity that accompanies inclusive education.

Carrington and Elkins (2002) argued that creating new knowledge and skills are needed to overcome the limitations in current school practice for students with diverse learning needs. Thus, supports need to be made available at a number of levels (both at policy and school levels) to achieve success in developing an inclusive school culture. Therefore, school culture and practices need to be studied to reduce the gap between policy and practice.

The findings of the above review illustrated how inclusive education had been envisaged and called for by the Government in developing countries, and how it was experienced and understood in practice. The review has also discussed the complexities of implementing inclusive education, presenting research from different developing countries which have a similarity with the context of Bangladesh. The present review of international literatures lays the foundation for conceptualising inclusive education and thinking alternatively to study the perspectives of inclusive education practices in the context of Bangladesh secondary schools. It provides a conceptual foundation as well as support for methodological decisions. For example, it informed my research to be aware of politics playing a role in the post-signing adoption of international policies does not necessarily result in obligations being achieved. Therefore, the intended and unintended goals of the policy need to be studied, as well as the preparation and readiness to accumulate those policies into practices should be examined. Thus, specific contextual experiences in implementation of policies needs to be recorded to understand the complexities. In this way, the international research helps to interpret the local practices. Moreover, it also prompts formulation of the research questions. Finally, the review contributes in aligning my research with policy and practices, as Grima-Farrell, Bain, and McDonagh (2011) said, “The inability to bridge the research-to-practice gap has an adverse effect on the progress of inclusion in schools and the ability of individual teachers to respond to the needs of all students” (p.136).

Chapter Three

Methodology of the Research

This chapter describes the research methodologies utilised during the study to answer the research questions. The chapter includes the rationale for the selected methodologies, along with a description of the research design. This includes a brief summary of previous related research utilising similar designs as well as information on the selection and recruitment of participants, how access was gained to the schools and policymakers, and a full description of the data collection and analysis undertaken. The ethical issues that were addressed are also described. To begin, the rationale of selecting a qualitative research approach is discussed.

Background of methodological decision

This study set out to explore the deeper meaning and complexities of identified gaps between inclusive education policies and practices in Bangladesh. Support for a qualitative approach to the study is provided by a number of researchers. For example, Merriam (2009) argued that qualitative research has the power to explore and describe complex issues that are shaped by local contexts, because qualitative research "focuses on meaning in context" (p. 2). Similarly, Janesick (2003) claimed that a good qualitative research design does justice to social settings. Krathwohl (2009) asserted that qualitative methods can be used to explore and also to test an explanation. Moreover, they are particularly useful for constructing contextual meaning from complex issues (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Selecting a qualitative approach also aligned with my epistemological stance, which has developed from an interpretivist philosophy. This was captured succinctly by Weber (2004), "Knowledge of the world is intentionally constituted through a person's lived experience" (p.iv). It was intended that by exploring the experiences of children with disabilities in Bangladesh high schools, their parents, and school staff, a rich picture of existing practices and the reasons supporting current practices will be developed. Therefore the research strategies employed were primarily qualitative with an interpretative and naturalistic approach to the subject matter (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

More specifically a qualitative case study approach was selected as it held promise to provide the opportunity to seek in-depth information to answer the research questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Stake, 2005). As a key focus of the research is how government policy is translated into practice and how it influences on the grounded realities of educators and

children with disabilities, it seemed case study methodology would best serve this focus (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2014; 2017; Hyett, Kenny and Dickson-Swift, 2014; Stake, 1995; 2003). Qualitative case study approaches have been used to effectively examine similar questions in different contexts. For example, Flem, Moen and Gudmundsdottir (2004) investigated successful inclusive education practices demonstrated by an experienced teacher using observation, video recording, and interviews within a single case study design. The key focus of the study was what the teacher did in practice in order to be successful and foster the children's development. Similarly, Warne and Price (2016) utilised a case study approach to examine the impact of policy changes on education programmes for gifted students in Texas public schools. They reported that a single case design was appropriate because this methodology is supportive for determining how subjects and organisations respond to changes in their environment. Further use of case study research design by educational researchers includes Gautam, Alford and Khanal's (2015) examination of how teachers in a Nepalese urban high-need school sustained a learning culture during a transition of school leadership. In a study that the current study aligns with, Shepherd, Hoban and Dixon (2014), employed a multiple case study design incorporating semi-structured student interviews, lesson observations and student work samples, to illustrate the experiences of four students with mild intellectual disabilities. Similarly, Murzyn and Hughes (2015) applied the multiple case study methodology to describe experiences of case managers taking mathematics placement decisions for students with high incidence disabilities in high schools. This study included 15 participants in three separate geographic locations and utilised semi-structured interviews and critical incident reporting instruments for data collection.

A case study research design also provides opportunities to document cultural and contextual aspects of inclusive education. For example, Monaghan, (2010) conducted interviews and observations in a predominantly qualitative case study investigating a school's inclusive educational environment for students with special educational needs. Tarr, Tsokova and Takkunen (2012) explored the inclusive education practice experienced by students who required additional support for their cognitive and physical disabilities in a renowned Finnish school. Their decision to utilise a case study design was driven by their intention to understand how school staff constructed inclusive practices through their day-to-day professional experiences. Lichtinger and Kaplan (2015) developed a situated case study approach for researching the experiences of a student with learning disabilities in an elementary school. They stated a key aspect to their approach, "involves triangulating and integrating different

types of data in order to construct an in-depth view of the student's flow of situated engagement in a teacher-assigned task” (p. 119).

In a Senegalese-based study, Drame and Kamphoff, (2014) undertook a descriptive-comparative case study research, following multiple case study design as the methodological approach, to study inclusive education for children with different abilities. According to the researchers, "Senegalese society is one that highly values family, community, language, and social interaction" (Drame & Kamphoff, 2014, p.71) and such a social value context is similar to Bangladesh. They positioned their research with case study methodology for its value of exploration in different contexts and its power of examining intersecting and co-constructed realities for children with disabilities within a local context. Collectively, these studies broadened my understanding of the different research designs that could be employed within a qualitative framework.

As I began to develop the plan for the study several tensions arose. A key tension was how to understand the details and drivers of Bangladesh government policies, yet clearly document how the people who these policies were supposedly influencing, experienced education. The significant tensions were created due to the conflict between the Constitutional focus on social justice and operational policies that derived from neoliberal influences. Therefore, a tension emerged for schooling goals: teaching for ensuring quality education for all or achieving standards in the public examination. In the following sections, I will describe how these tensions were recognised and resolved.

Research paradigm: Theoretical framework

In order to capture the complexities of the implementation of inclusive education practices, I decided to utilise a constructivist-dominated research paradigm. This study in some ways cuts across the boundaries of conventional research methodologies, as an overarching aim was to describe a rich research context (Bogdan & Beklen, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Theories can be viewed as virtual reality systems that help practitioners connect to day-to-day realities (Stoilescu, 2016). The theoretical framework and research paradigm play important roles in the research. A constructivist epistemological approach considers that “knowledge and meaning are generated from interactions between people’s actions, experiences and their subjective states of mind” (Stoilescu, 2016, p.144). The theoretical standpoint for the current methodology is linked with Vygotsky’s (1978) approach to considering constructivism. I positioned in this research from two points of view: a) The teacher plays an active role in instructing and shaping

children's knowledge, and b) The experts and policymakers play a vital role in adopting and shaping inclusive education policy that influences the art of teaching and teachers in a country. This study focused on both the Bangladesh government's policy context and the experiences, perceptions and practices of staff, students and families of five diverse high schools. The aim of the study was to formulate a holistic understanding of inclusive education practices for students with disabilities in mainstream secondary schools in Bangladesh. Conducting individual school-based case studies was crucial to a undertaking a detailed investigation into the complexities of inclusive education (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2003) yet understanding the individuality of each school's experiences. Hyett, Kenny and Dickson-Swift (2014) stated that "qualitative case study approaches are shaped by paradigm, study design, and selection of methods" (p.1). Therefore, it was important for me to choose an appropriate paradigm, research design and methods.

During the research design process I also considered four questions posed by Mittwede (2012, p. 23):

- How is research to be conceived?
- How is reality perceived?
- How do we know what we know?
- To what extent can we be sure of it?

These considerations led to deriving blended qualitative paradigm including both 'criticality' and 'constructivism'. This is consistent with Stoilescu (2016) suggestion of utilising multiple approaches to achieve relevance with constructivism. Therefore, my research is positioned within a framework of a blend of social constructivism, critical lens theory and a critical disability framework. These are described below.

Social constructivism, critical theory and critical disability theory

A social constructivism paradigm focuses on the influence of the environment which "becomes a contributing factor in creating disabilities" (Peña, Stapleton, & Schaffer, 2016, p.86). This paradigm is associated with the social model of disability in that disability is viewed as a social construct (Oliver, 1990; 2009/1996). This paradigm therefore advocates respecting the direct experience of persons with disabilities and that their account of life and experiences are a valuable source of data (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2011). Proponents of this paradigm assert that changes in society are needed to establish and meet the rights of persons with disabilities and that there is nothing wrong with them (Oliver, 1990; 2009/1996).

In contrast, during analysis of the policy text and locating global influences, a critical theory approach is utilised. According to Mittwede (2012) “As with critical theory, the epistemology of constructivism is transactional, and its ‘findings’ are literally created as the investigation proceeds” (p.27). Several researchers recognised that critical theory explores the inherent relationship or connection between politics, values and knowledge (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996; Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Alvesson & Willmott, 1996; Fournier & Grey, 2000; Vossoughi, Hooper & Escudé, 2016). Johnson and Duberley (2000) argued that critical theory supports the examination of issues such as exploitation, unsymmetrical power relations, distorted or contorted communication, and false or artificial consciousness.

The study also includes elements of critical disability theory when interpreting issues of disabilities. Shildrick (2007) explores the goals of a critical disability theory that “seeks to extend and productively critique the achievements of working through more modernist paradigms of disability, such as the social constructionist model” (p. 233). Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) argued that impairment or disability cannot be simply understood as biological or socially constructed; in that it exemplifies oppressive social relations. The following section describes how such theories contributed to the study’s overarching framework.

Critical framework

Considering ‘disability’ from a rights-based perspective, my study incorporated a ‘critical framework’ described by Peña, Stapleton and Schaffer (2016). The framework was utilised as a lens to understand and examine the disability issues critically within social settings (i.e., Bangladesh high schools). The goal was to “re-evaluate and critique notions of disability in order to facilitate social change” (Peña, Stapleton & Schaffer, 2016, p.89) and assumed “that disabled people are undervalued and discriminated against and this cannot be changed simply through liberal or neoliberal legislation and policy” (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p.65). My research utilised such critical enquiry that expands our understanding of disabled people’s place in the world (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p.66), especially the ‘place’ of students with disabilities into mainstream high schools in Bangladesh. Thus, it includes materialist analyses and “the politics inherent in disabled people’s lived experience and the multiple socio-cultural factors that can constrain their agency” (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 65).

The study design: Case study

This study took a qualitative case study methodology. The case is that of inclusive education in Bangladesh. Within this, there are a number of embedded cases: five schools' policy, planning and practices of inclusive education for children with disabilities. A case study "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2003, p. 13). Furthermore Stake (2003) defines case study methodology as situation specific and so bound by time and place. As the current study aims to understand the lived experiences of educators, students and parents of a contemporary phenomenon (inclusive education), it is bounded by context of settings and time. A case study approach also provides flexibility to include a combination of quantitative (e.g., school enrolment information) and qualitative (e.g., thematically analysed interview information) data. However the main emphasis was on exploring participants' understandings, aspirations and reports of practice. The intention is to provide what Geertz (1988) calls 'thick' descriptions of the multiple facets of how each school addresses the education of children with disabilities. The investigation of contemporary policy was also predominantly qualitative, as it considered key stakeholders' perceptions of the underlying intentions of inclusive education policies.

Research phases

The study involved two distinct phases. The first phase involved the analysis of policy documents and interviews with Bangladeshi policymakers, experts and senior Bangladeshi education academics. The purpose of this stage was threefold. First, to clarify understanding of the relationship between global education policies and Bangladeshi policies and legislation. Second, to record the current understandings of policymakers and academics on current policies. And third to conceptualise policymakers' and academics' expectations for implementation of these policies. The second phase of the study was researching and developing the case studies of five high schools. The purpose of these cases was to examine actual educational practices alongside the understandings and aspirations of students, their families and educators.

Participants recruitment

A variety of participants were recruited to the study. These included school administrators, teachers, students and parents of students with disability from five high schools. The rational

for selecting multiple school sites was to provide a broad range of input from individuals which could be contrasted with input from others located at other sites (Saven-Baden & Major, 2013). Professionals including government officials, teacher educators, education policy experts, policymakers, national and international development activist and senior academic in the field of education and disability were also recruited to the study to support the analysis of government policies. The following sections detail the recruitment process undertaken.

Recruitment for professional conversations

The participants were selected through a cluster purposive sampling technique, because professionals and policymakers from different categories would be supportive for exploring in-depth information. The selection criteria as well as the details of the participants and areas covered during the conversations are shown in the Table 9 in the Chapter Ten on analysis of professional conversations with Bangladesh's experts.

The participants were one member of the National Parliament who was especially assigned to the standing committee for education and disability, one person who has had experiences of working in the public examination for secondary education in Bangladesh, one teacher educator who was involved with in-service and pre-service secondary teacher training in terms of inclusive education, two key people from development organisations who have influence on government policies (one from the national level and another from an INGO), two top-level government administrators who had experiences of working in policy formulation and also had some responsibilities in policy implementation at the field level, two senior academics, working in public universities, specialised in the field of education, policy and disability, and one person who was involved with preparing the latest national education policy.

School recruitment

A major task in this research was the selection of appropriate mainstream secondary schools. Previous research described the challenges in finding Bangladesh schools that met the criteria of at least three to four children with documented disabilities in each targeted class (Rahaman, 2011). In order to identify potential schools, I viewed the latest Bangladesh official education statistics and calculated the average number of students with disabilities in individual secondary schools as 2.86, and the percentage of disabled students was 0.60 (See Appendix 1 for grade wise breakdown of figures). This low enrolment figure created a further tension as I aimed to recruit schools with at least six students with disabilities in each of the selected schools.

Participant schools were purposively selected based on having students with disability enrolled, student achievement data, and school contexts. The specific inclusion criteria included that a school must have at least six students with documented disabilities. At least two schools selected were considered successful in supporting student achievement. The three context considerations were: i) to reflect the geographical and administrative diversity of Bangladesh; ii) representation of both urban and rural areas; and, iii) representation of three types of general secondary schools namely: boys-only, girls-only and co-education settings.

In selecting the schools, I first constructed a participant pool from which to base selections (Drew, Hardman & Hosp, 2008). The BANBEIS (2016) database and Bangladesh secondary and higher secondary education board website were consulted in order to construct a participant pool that was reflective of the diverse geographical locations of schools. Figure 3 shows the process of participant selection using a participant pool. The strategies of forming the participant pool are discussed below.



Figure 3. Participant selection using a participant pool

Theoretically, I utilised ‘snowball’ or ‘chain referral sampling’ (Andrews & Vassenden, 2007; Brace-Govan, 2004; Hall and Hall, 1996; Noy, 2008) for selecting the potential schools for the study. This involves utilising existing networks to support identification of schools (Kumar, 2005) and can generate a unique type of social knowledge which is emergent, political and interactional (Noy, 2008). Brace-Govan (2004) argued that ‘snowball sampling’ generates a ‘purposeful sample’ of participants or case sites, and is effective at the initial stages of access to the research field in minimising the risk of possible misunderstandings that can arise between researchers and potential participants. Therefore, I utilised my extensive professional networks, the students at my University and social media. Being a teacher of a public university as well as teacher educator, I have many existing connections with classroom teachers. After consultation with people in my networks, I identified 12 schools which met the inclusion

criteria. I approached each of these schools to seek initial information, such as student demographics, academic achievement of students and students with disabilities. Based on this information I selected the five schools for participation in the study.

At least two of the schools selected were seen as relatively ‘successful’ in meeting the education needs of children with disabilities. The reason for this choice is that previous educational research in Bangladesh (and perhaps also in other developing countries) has focused on deficits in educational practice and in resources, and I intended to focus on what is reputed to ‘work well’. Moreover, because economic conditions inevitably make it hard for policy to be consistently implemented throughout a developing country, it is envisaged that more may be learned about how policy aligns with practice by studying schools that are perceived as ‘doing well’ in terms of educating children with disabilities.

Description of the schools

The five diverse schools selected for the study were (pseudonyms): i) Shibani Pilot Girl’s High School; ii) Basanti Model High School; iii) Dhaka Damayanti High School; iv) Megawati Adarsha High School; v) Ttajasbita School and College. A detailed contextual description of each of the selected school is provided in each of the school case study chapters. Table 1 provides basic information about the selected schools to illustrate their diversity.

Table 1.
The selected schools at a glance

Name of the school	Location	Total Number			Accessibility features		Remarks
		Teacher	Students	SWD ¹	Ramp	Accessible Toilets	
Shibani Pilot Girl’s High School	Upazilla ² level	23	717	08	Yes ³	Yes, but unused	Remote rural school
Basanti Model High School	Remote hilly area	17	815	12	Yes ³	Yes, but unused	Surrounded by different ethnic communities
Dhaka Damayanti High School	Heart of the capital city	32	900	06	Yes ³	No	Beside a busy city street
Megawati Adarsha High School	Industrial area	57	2500	82 ⁴	Yes ³	No	Perceived as successful school
Ttajasbita School and College	Township near the capital	225	10000	09	Yes ³	Yes	One of the best performing schools

Note: ¹SWD denotes students with disabilities; ²sub-district; ³only connected the school yard with the ground floor, but no ramp for the second floor of the school building; ⁴there was a confusion with the number, 82 as claimed by the head teacher, but the assistant head teacher and other teachers were aware of only 7 students with documented disabilities.

Gaining access

The use of gatekeepers was significant for this research. After identifying a possible participants' pool of 12 schools, I began searching for gatekeepers. This involved communication with potential individuals through social media. I managed to identify and contact one potential gatekeeper for each of the identified schools. These individuals had very strong relationships with the identified schools. Once the final five schools were identified I provided the gatekeepers with the study information letter and discussed plans to approach and enter schools. On entry to the first school, I realised the importance of the gatekeepers. The head teacher informed me that he had cancelled an important meeting at the district headquarters, because of the gatekeeper's request.

The role of gatekeeping is important in obtaining culturally appropriate and authentic data from the field (Broadhead & Rist, 1976; Henderson, 2011). Miller and Bell (2002) defined a 'gatekeeper' as "someone who gives access to other interviewees but who would not necessarily actually take part in a study by being interviewed themselves" (p.67). The term gatekeepers literally stems from those who control access to a particular place or premises by opening or closing a gate or door for someone. In research, the concept of a gatekeeper is provision of support to the researchers for ensuring smooth access to certain contexts or premises where a researcher can access sources of data. Backhouse (1999) reported the significant role of gatekeepers in her research in Australian aboriginal communities. She suggested that gatekeeping in research may create an opportunity for the communities to be involved with a research project. This is captured in the following quote:

The term gatekeeping is used to refer to the control exercised by individuals or groups over the research process. In a sense, anyone, who has control of some area of the research, acts as someone who opens and shuts gates to research. They allow certain people into an area or allow particular activities to take place, and at the same time, they are able to prevent other people from entering or other activities from taking place. (Backhouse, 1999, p.20)

In the current study, the gatekeepers are neither direct nor indirect research participants, but became important agents for supporting local access to participants. As the gatekeepers hold sway at local community levels their involvement was supportive in avoiding any infernal occurrence that may result from the researcher being incognisant of place-specific beliefs and

customs. The gatekeepers for this study had previously completed their masters from my tertiary organisation and were now working in local government or non-government sectors near the identified schools. Before approaching schools, I met each gatekeeper to gather preliminary insights about the school and the surrounding localities.

Data collection methods and participants

This study incorporated a variety of methods for gathering data from the field. Yin (2003) proposed four principles of data collection that are important for high quality case study research. These were: i) using multiple, not just single, sources of evidence; ii) creating a case study database; iii) maintaining a chain of evidence; and (d) exercising care in using data from electronic sources (p.98). Considering these principles, data were collected from multiple sources using different tools. The following section describes the data collection methods, sources and tools employed.

Both main phases of this research project utilised different combinations of data sources and collection methods. Table 2 provides a summary of the data sources and collection methods and tools.

Table 2.
The major data collection methods and tools of the study

Methods	Tools	Data source	Remarks
<i>Formal strategies for gathering data</i>			
Policy document analysis	Document analysis matrix	Policy texts both national and global levels; and international documents (e.g., National Education Policy 2010, UNCRPD, 2006)	to identify global policy influences on Bangladesh policy
School record analysis	Document analysis matrix	School records (i.e., meeting regulations, school policies) and Student achievement records	to show the progress or position of students with disabilities, also helpful to identify 'successful schools'
Professional dialogues	Open-ended semi-structured interview	Ten professionals including mid-level policy administrators, government officials, policymakers, senior academics, experts and teacher educators	Followed interpretative tradition, started with three guiding questions and continued with prompts /probes. To identify information related to policy formulation, implementation and translation into practice
Interviews with parents	Semi-structured interview guideline, Audio-recording	Five parents of students with disabilities from five selected schools (one from each school)	Starts with three guiding questions and continued with prompts /probes
Consultation with head teachers	Semi-structured interview guideline, Audio-recording	The school-heads of the selected schools	Overall focus on the school practices as well as addressed the national perspectives.

Methods	Tools	Data source	Remarks
Interview with assistant head teacher/Teacher-in-charge	Semi-structure interview guideline; Audio-recording	The assistant head teacher/ teacher-in-charge in each school	To describe experiences and challenges, with a focus on academic management and supervision
Group interviews with educators	Semi-structured group interview guideline, Audio-recording	Six to eight participants in each group interview.	To see how individual conception and experiences interacted with that of peers. My role was that of a moderator in each interview settings.
School observation	Reflective journal, anecdotal and field notes, Photographs	Researcher observation of school location, physical facilities, environment and interactions	To further explore the the school context in terms of inclusive education policy in practice
Participant Observation	Reflective journal, anecdotal and field notes	observations of classroom activities of the selected teachers	Supported to understand the complexity of inclusive classroom practice and school context
<i>Informal Strategies of gathering data</i>			
Discussion with students	Reflective journal and field notes	At the end of classroom teaching learning activities	To provide further conceptualisation of student experience and perceptions of specific issues related to inclusive education
Talk to students	Guideline	Two to three students with disabilities in each school	Focus on his/her likes, dislikes, challenges, achievement, progress and other related issues
Informal discussion with SMC members	Issue based discussion, Reflective journal and field notes	School managing committee members who were present or came to meet me during school visits	to discuss experiences and support positive relationship with the school and wider community

In the first study phase, focused on ‘policy analysis’, the main sources of data were professional conversations and analyses of policy texts. These professional conversations involved semi-structured interviews with administrators and policymakers. The second phase, the description of school contexts, incorporated reviews of academic records, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews with school staff, students and their parents.

Informal data gathering strategies (see Table 2) arose during the course of the project as additional opportunities became available to obtain more in-depth insights. The relative flexibility of the research design enabled this exploration as opportunities were presented. These strategies were also supportive in increasing the reliability, validity, trustworthiness and rigour of data. Furthermore, these informal strategies produced some explanatory data to understand the socio-cultural context of the school practices.

Setting the scene and informal strategies

An important first task during school visits was to meet and build rapport with participants (Hiruy, 2014; Jones & Zaff, 2017). Smith (2015) found the tremendous role of rapport building

in sharing mutual personal aspects. On the other hand, Jachyra, Atkinson and Washiya (2015) illustrated the elucidatory importance of rapport building to minimise the possible tensions within various socio-contextual interview factors that may emerge during research. In this respect, my existing academic position and relationship with gatekeepers appeared to contribute to being warmly welcomed at each school. Furthermore, my awareness of Bangladeshi culture and customs enabled me to employ some strategies for rapport building. One such strategy was to provide a simple gift (souvenir) for the school staff and chocolates for students. These strategies appeared to support participants' involvement in the study.

At each school visited, I was offered to join a tea party with a variety of school and local people. When the head teacher of the first school visited asked me to join a lunch party, I hesitated to accept his invitation. However the head teacher reminded me, "You are our guest... entertaining guests at our premises is a symbol of good luck". The claim of the head teacher is also supported by people of other countries. For example, the Canadian government website stated that "Bangladeshis always have positive and welcoming attitude ...and openness to hospitality" (Government of Canada, 2014). I then agreed to join in the meal, and that opened a new door for the study. Thereafter each school organised a welcome tea-party and invited members of the SMCs. In several schools, I was asked me to provide a lecture on inclusive teaching and learning. These sessions were provided when my data collection activities were completed.

Professional conversations

For the first phase of the study, individual professional conversations with experts seemed important for my study to get an explanation regarding the aspirations, gaps and realities of inclusive education policies and practices in Bangladesh. Irvine and Price (2014) perceived professional conversations as a collaborative approach that could support policy implementation and promote shared understanding. According to them, one of the ideas of a professional conversation is to recognise "the existing knowledge and expertise of conversation participants" (p.87), and such a conversation "addresses many of the features that have been linked to effective professional learning supporting practice change" (p.91).

Conversations with diverse professionals on a specific topic may provide a better explanation. Thus, in this study ten individual professional conversations were conducted using an open-ended guideline (see Appendix 2) with a diverse range of professionals who were in some way involved with education and disability, because professionals "bring a background of perspectives and beliefs about the nature of professional knowledge to the process' (Tillema,

& Orland-Barak, 2006, p.592) when professionals engage in a process of collaborative knowledge construction by professional conversations.

The participants in the professional conversations were somehow elites of the society: individuals who, according to the definition by Odendahl and Shaw (2011), “generally have more knowledge, money, and status and assume a higher position than others in the population” (p.299). In my study, the participants of professional conversations occupied the top echelons of working with policy, research teacher education and implementation of programmes of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Bangladesh. Odendahl and Shaw (2011), suggested choosing the location of the interview for the subject's convenience. All the interviews took place in the respective offices of the participants as per the schedule made by them. I sent the information letter beforehand for getting consent, so they could know about my intention. Moreover, I had also used a little background information “during the meeting to demonstrate familiarity with the person or institution, to stimulate discussion, or to spark reactions” (Odendahl & Shaw, 2011, p.309).

In my research, the experts were the key informants in exploring the policy expectation and external influences. Johnson (2004) suggested conducting informant interviews in “a more in-depth, less structured manner” (p.493). Therefore, I favoured a semi-structured design derived from my research questions. These professional conversations are supportive to understand the complexity of policy formulation and implementation processes. They were also supportive to explore the influences of global policies on Bangladesh policies. Finding out variation between policies and practices is vital for this research. Thus, it is felt that professional conversations would provide the best ways to extract information related to policy and practice as well as to identify the obstacles, successes and gaps that exist in the Bangladesh education system in terms of inclusive education. During these conversations, along with other discussions, strategies to ensure educational rights of children with disabilities into the mainstream were focused.

Each individual conversation was started with an introductory discussion on basic values and beliefs of the participants in terms of inclusion. Then it followed up on themes that emerged from the conversations and also from field data. A brief general guideline was prepared for the consultation. Every statement of the consultation was audio recorded and was given equal importance for the research. A guideline was developed and shown in Appendix 2.

Individual consultation with head teachers

Each school visit included comprehensive individual consultation with the head teacher or principal. These discussions were open-ended and semi-structured with a pre-set guideline. There was also a reciprocal component in that at times head teachers would ask for my thoughts and experiences. In response to these questions I would minimally respond and gently return the focus to the head teacher's contribution. Descriptions of the participant head teachers are shown in the table 3.

Discussions with head teachers took place soon after arriving at the school and then again on completion of data collection activities. The initial discussions typically were brief (approximately 15 to 20 minutes) and involved the head teachers describing the school, the local community and the concept of inclusive education. The second discussion was longer (approximately 30-45 minutes). The focus of the second discussion was to seek clarification about the practices observed or information received during the visit. In some cases, the members of the SMC accompanied the head teacher during our conversations. All the conversations were audio-recorded.

Table 3.

Description of the institutional heads participated in the individual consultation

Name of the School	School Head* ¹² Pseudonyms	Highest profession al degree	Years of experiences		Summary/Key focus/issue/ significant quotes
			Teaching	School Head	
1. Shibani Pilot Girl's High School	Tajul Islam	M.Ed	17	04	Inclusion is possible, and my school is complying with the government policy of inclusive education.
2. Basanti Model High School	Ramshing Chakma	B.Ed	31	20	IE is indigenous cultural value driven strategies. We are practicing IE since the Scholl commencement, as our classrooms are multicultural in nature.
3. Dhaka Damayanti High School	Mizanur Rahaman	M.Ed	18	10	Supported disability specific special schooling; "We are not capable enough to teach them, but due to the policy, we included them. Many schools are not yet open for them".
4. Megawati Adarsha High School	Ashraful	M.Ed	45	05** ¹³	How could we understand or manage the disability in students, as we have no technical knowledge
5. Ttajasbita School and College	Atiqur	PhD	27	23	The magic word 'we' instead of 'I' could motivate teachers to take more responsibility for implementing inclusive education.

¹² The school head for first four schools is called "head teacher", where as it is 'Principal' for the 5th school;

¹³ He joined this school after his retirement as a head teacher from another school, four years back. All head teachers were male

An interview framework (see Appendix 3) was designed to support presentation of questions about the practice of inclusion at the school sites. The framework attempts to determine what models or examples of inclusive practice were utilised and what gaps existed between their practices and stated policies. The framework consisted of four broad guiding questions (two for each step) with a series of other questions. For example, two initial guiding questions were ‘what works for this school?’ and ‘what does not work?’ in terms of inclusive education for children with disabilities. The second discussion started with the questions ‘what do you do to support students with disabilities in the school?’ and ‘what might be changed?’ Throughout all these interviews a range of minimal prompts were used to support further information from participants (i.e., how?, really, why?, can you give an example?). In addition to the specified questions in the framework, additional questions were presented in order to gain clarification of points raised.

Group interviews with teachers

At each school, a group discussion was conducted with teachers who were teaching students with disabilities. The discussion aimed to understand interviewees’ experiences around inclusive education practice for children with disabilities. The discussion was started with simple questions such as “what do you do in the classroom?” and “what do you do specially for children with disabilities?” Teachers were also encouraged to reflect on their “role as a teacher, and changing role in inclusive settings”, and were asked about the broader classroom context, experiences and observations of children with disabilities and any areas of concern around inclusive education. These group discussions were not time-limited and continued until a point of data saturation, or when it seemed that participants had expressed all they had to say on the discussion topics (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). A predefined discussion framework (see Appendix 5) was utilised during the discussions. The following section provides further detail about how group interviews were conducted.

Why I choose to do group interviews with teachers

I conducted group interviews for various reasons; the first one is to gather data from a maximum number of teachers. The second consideration was saving time because doing individual one-to-one interview with six to eight teachers in each school would consume most of my fieldwork time. The third was to explore the debates on specific topics among teachers because participants had differing views on many issues. The fourth was to acquire diverse views of educators on a particular issue to understand social enactment. The fifth reason was to explore individual stories of practice. Hurworth (2011) argued that a group interview

initiates such discussions in a group enabling a different perspective on a problem not possible through individual interviews. According to the nature of my study, the overall educators' understanding on the school practice or evaluation of school inclusive education initiatives might not be possible to explore through one-to-one interview with educators.

Role of the researcher in group interviews

As the primary researcher, I took on the role of facilitating-moderator during the group interviews with an overarching aim of providing all participants with the opportunity to express their ideas, thoughts, and views (Archer, 2007). The structure of group interviews were as follows:

- Identification of a suitable room in liaison with the head teacher or deputy head teacher;
- Setting up of the room;
- Notification to participants about the time and location of the interview;
- Welcome and exchange greetings with each participant;
- Provision of study information and consent forms;
- Discussion on any study information (e.g., audio-recording was for the purpose of the study, and that participants would remain anonymous); and,
- Presentation of interview ground rules (e.g., participants free to express their ideas, non-judgemental and inclusive approach to all responses).

Several strategies were utilised during interviews to support participants' contributions and wider group discussion (Archer, 2007). These included minimal note taking, active listening such as the use of head nodding together with small verbal reinforcers (e.g., aha). I also provided questions and verbal prompts to probe for supplementary information. For example, "It's true, but what else?", "I am not clear about the . . .", and "Would you give me an example of that?" I was mindful to provide every participant with the opportunity to contribute. At times, I had to actively shift the focus from one participant to another. For example, "thanks for sharing such a good idea, I'm keen to know what Alimuzzaman is thinking? Or "Who has any similar or different ideas?". These techniques were effective in obtaining input from all participants.

Participants in the group interviews

The number of participants in the group interviews varied from school to school, due to availability and interest. Generally, all group interviews were conducted after the school hours

and lasted approximately 90 minutes. The following table provides a summary of participants. Detailed descriptions of participants are included in respective school chapters.

Table 4.

Group interview participants

School (Pseudonyms)	Number of participants			Participants Name (Pseudonyms)	Remarks
	Male	Female	Total		
1. Shibani Pilot Girl's High School	3	3	6	Jabbar, Alimuzzaman, Jesmin, Hossain, Khatun, and Juthika.	Participants were from different ethnicities
2. Basanti Model High School	4	4	8	Mongkui, Sunil, Akhil, Sumon, Aninta, Sulekha Roy, Sashimala, and Rangamilla.	
3. Dhaka Damayanti High School	5	4	9	Gopal, Rashid, Sahina, Salim, Ahsan, Sharifa, Tauhida, Amina, and Sarwar.	Sarwar requested to include him in the interview
4. Megawati Adarsha High School	4	3	7	Fazlur, Halima, Kakuly, Hanifa, Aslam, Huda and Akbar.	
5. Ttajasbita School and College	3	3	6	Arosi, Abul, Anjan, Awlad, Ruma and Asifa.	
Total	19	17	36		

Semi-structured interviews with assistant head teachers and parents

During the study five interviews were conducted with assistant head teachers and six interviews were conducted with parents of students with disabilities. All interviews followed an interpretative approach with the aim of identifying themes central to inclusive education practices and making meaning from these themes (Seidman, 2006). All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. I had different goals for interviewing parents and assistant head teachers. My goal for interviewing parents was to get some insights about the school practices for their child with a disability. Moreover, the information I received was mainly utilised to develop an individual story about the child's education. On the other hand, interviews with assistant head teachers provided an opportunity to get explanation about academic practices in schools. Usually, the head teacher is the institutional head, but the assistant head teacher is more involved with supervision of teachers' activities in Bangladesh secondary schools.

Settings and participants: Interview with assistant head teachers

Five assistant head teachers of the selected schools were interviewed. All the interviews with assistant head teachers took place in their respective school offices. All the assistant head teachers were experienced teachers with at least a B.Ed degree. Except for the case of Megawati Adarsha High School, all the assistant head teachers were male. They provided very important information. Sometimes their information was contradictory with the information provided by the headteacher. For example, the head teacher in Megawati Adarsha High School claimed that

about 80 students with disabilities were enrolled in his school, but later when I interviewed the assistant head teacher, she told that the number was different. By this was she introduced a different story than the head teacher had. in this way, the interview with assistant head teacher supported my aim to ensure data validity and reliability. Descriptions of the participant assistant head teachers are shown in table 5.

Table 5.
Description of the interviewed assistant head teachers

Name of the school	Assistant head teacher pseudonyms	Sex	Highest professional degree	Years of teaching experiences	Remarks
1. Shibani Pilot Girl's High School	Kashem	Male	B.Ed	32	
2. Basanti Model High School	Pulkhet	Male	B.Ed	15	Chakma Ethnicity
3. Dhaka Damayanti High School	Ahmed	Male	M.Ed	17	
4. Megawati Adarsha High School	Rubina	Female	M.Ed	18	
5. Ttajasbita School and College	Anwar	Male	M.Ed	09	Teacher-in- charge

Settings and participants: Interview with parents

In order to increase participant comfort and preparation for interviews, parents were sent study information and interview guidelines (Appendix 6) one week prior to the scheduled interview date. The following table provides details of parent participants and their settings.

Table 6.
Description of the participants in the interview with parents

Name of the School	Participant Name*	Occupation	Scio-economic status	Child with a disability and relation	Interview Place	Remarks/ Accompanied by
1. Shibani Pilot Girl's High School	Sarif	Farmer	Upper Middle	Nishi' father	Nishi's House	his wife
2. Basanti Model High School	Takel Chakma	Jhum** farmer	Low	Nickel's father	Nickel's House	his daughter
3. Dhaka Damayanti High School	Hashim	Driver (Govt. service)	Middle	Tania's father	Tania's flat	
4. Megawati Adarsha High School	Sakhina	Social worker	High	Mithila's mother	At school	
	Munmun	House wife	Middle	Manoshi' mother	At her House	her husband
5. Ttajasbita School and College	Munmun	Business	High	Arif's mother	At school	

*Pseudonym ; ** *Jhum is special slash-and-burn type of agriculture, also called 'shifting cultivation' that involves the cutting and burning of plants in a hilly forest to create a field, and then planting various crop seeds*

Interview Guidelines

For conducting interview with parents and assistant head teacher two separate guidelines were developed (one for parents and one for assistant head teachers), in order to allow participants autonomy to shift agendas and so to provide a bulk of information on the basis of their knowledge and self-experiences (McLafferty, 2004; Thomas et al., 1995). The guidelines comprised a set of sequential questions to make a reconnaissance of participant's experience. Besides providing pictures of existing school practices, the interviews allowed exploration of end-users' opinions and experiences. Three separate guidelines (see appendix 4 for assistant head teacher, appendix 6 for parents) were developed and were flexible, and open-ended. In fact, the guidelines were developed to comprehend the practice level of inclusive education at specific secondary school and what are the gaps between their practices and stated policy. Each of the guidelines consisted of three broad guiding questions and a number of prompts that could be given. The guiding questions for parents were: 'What is working well for your child in the school?', 'What does not work?', and 'What might be changed for effective learning of your child?'. The guiding questions for interviewing assistant head teachers were "what works in your school?", "What does not work?", and 'What might be changed for effective implementation of inclusive education at your school". In addition to these guiding questions, a few more questions were added in the in-depth interviews. Some different focuses were provided in the interviews with assistant head teachers, like they were asked to highlight the mechanisms and strategies which have proved effective in making the inclusive initiatives successful. Moreover, they were also asked to identify factors which contributed to the success, and identify the areas of concerns and constraints in terms of inclusive education for students with disabilities.

A quite different focus was provided during consultation with school heads. The head teachers were asked: to highlight the mechanisms and strategies which have proved effective in making the inclusive initiatives successful; to focus on the issues and opportunities that need to be addressed for successful mainstreaming of children with disabilities in the school; to highlight the main implications of the lessons learned. The head teacher was also consulted for providing his recommendations based on the lessons learned, and also asked to focus on what should be an ideal role of a classroom teacher for teaching in an inclusive environment. These individual discussions with selected school head provided a better understanding of the inclusion dynamics of Bangladesh secondary schools.

For guidance, some prompts were introduced in all the interviews to keep respondents on track such as ‘I am not clear about the...’, ‘What do you mean...’, ‘Tell me more...’, ‘Did I get you correctly?’, ‘Can you give me another example?’ ‘How?’, ‘Why?’, and ‘ Really?’

Participant observations

Given (2008) perceived participant observation as “a method of data collection in which the researcher takes part in everyday activities related to an area of social life in order to study an aspect of that life through the observation of events in their natural contexts” (p.599). In my research, the purpose of utilising participant observations was to gain a deep understanding of inclusive education classroom practices for students with disabilities, and also to achieve insights into teachers’ and students’ construction of meaning of their practices by their lived experiences, as participant observation provides “a better understanding of the context and phenomenon under study” (Kawulich, 2005). In fact, I carried out observations of teaching and learning activities of the selected participants with the aim of supporting my interview data. Such observations supported me to widen my contextual understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon, as well as creating an opportunity of “learning through first-hand experience” (O'Reilly, 2009, p.150) and getting direct knowledge of the subjects (Burgess, 1982) that seemed crucial for uncovering and inferring the significance in answering the research questions (Thompson & Brewer, 2003).

According to the selected research design, I transcribed all the observations. However, purposefully I put more importance on several pre-determined criterion in observations, as Kumar (2005) described observations as purposeful activities. I observed the interaction pattern in the classroom carefully, focusing on teaching-learning strategies and engagement of children with disabilities, management of the class and participations of students with disabilities. Moreover, I developed a flexible guideline consisting of 11 criteria for observation. These criteria were the educator’s professional skills and attitude, planning, content knowledge, communication, group management, teaching strategies and classroom management, engagement, questioning, teaching aids, relationship and evaluation. Obviously, I had a special focus on children with disabilities who were in the class. During the observation, in a few cases, I also participated in the class. I considered narrative methods of recording the observations (Kumar, 2005) in my own words. Additionally, I took a few photographs in the class. I did audio-recording of the entire observations and soon after wrote down the detailed narrative notes.

I conducted two observation of participants in each school except for Shibani Pilot Girl's High School. My initial planning was to observe classes within the regular school routine, but when I approached to observe classes in Shibani Pilot Girl's High School, the head teacher went with me to a class of grade 7. Suddenly he took over the class from the young Bangla teacher and said, "I am going to teach you English because my teacher has come to observe the class". After the class, I told him that I needed to find two more classes without his presence. Then he agreed. Later I observed the class conducted by Hasanuzzaman in the grade 7, and Bangla poetry lesson by Jesmin in the grade 9. The following figure 4 shows a typical mainstream classroom that I observed at Megawati Adarsha High School. A total of 65 students were present, whereas eight were absent. Two students with disabilities were seated in the back rows.

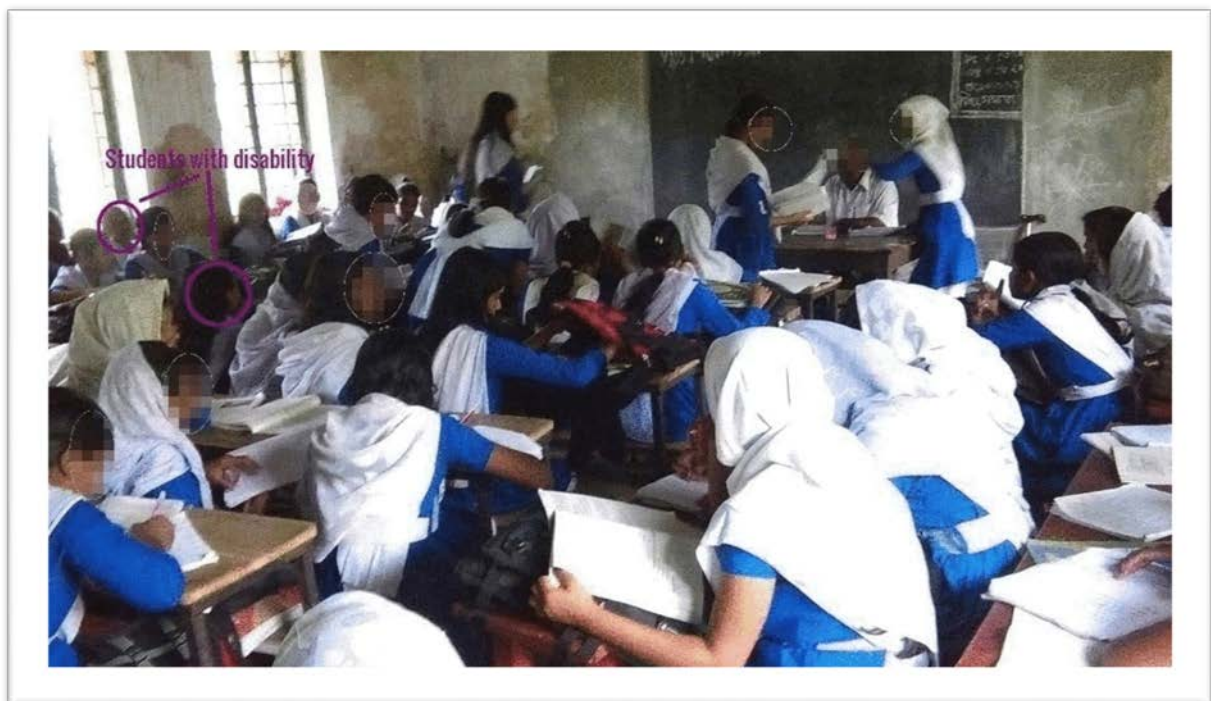


Figure 4. A grade 9 classroom at Megawati Adarsha High School

School observation

I did 'direct observation' (Yin, 2003) of each school and took field notes as well as photographs. The aim of my school observations was to explore the physical facilities available for children with disabilities. Moreover, I observed the school learning environment, especially the interactional pattern between children with disabilities and their peers. In most cases, I did observation of such interactional patterns during the break period, or during the finish of the school time when children were in hurry to leave. I also observed such interaction patterns in the playground before starting the class. I took photographs at the fieldwork sites, as Yin (2003)

suggested photographing observation sites to cover the case's context. The following figure shows a snapshot of my observation sites.



Figure 5. Snapshots of the schools

(note image 1- the academic and administrative building of Dhaka Damayanti High School, image 2- the academic building of Ttajasbita School and College, image 3- Main academic building of Shibani Pilot Girl's High School; image 4-one of the buildings of Basanti Model High School)

Document analysis

In this research, document analysis appeared to be appropriate for providing the basic foundation of understanding. I collected and analysed two types of documents as evidence for my research, policy documents and school records. For the first phase of the study, various official, as well as policy documents, were analysed, because organisational records that are analysed inductively reveal the perspectives and assumptions of the people who produce them (Morton, 2010). In the second phase in exploring the school practices, archival records from the schools, including students' records, school attendance, and regulations of the managing committee, were collected and analysed. The respective school heads gave their full support in making available school archival documents for this study.

Contextual photographs

In order to capture the complexity and rich contextualised details of practices and outcomes, I considered photographs as a tool for generating objective shreds of evidence. In the contemporary educational research traditions, the use of photography has increased and has

become a popular technique of data gathering for several researchers. For example, Salahuddin (2016) utilised school's archival photos as well as taking pictures himself to illustrate the school practices from a leadership perspective in Bangladesh. He argued that photographs are a powerful device to support development of richer stories of school practices. Allen (2011), in an attempt to answer the question 'what does this photograph really mean' in his research, asserted that the camera never lies. He further claimed that photos could offer evidence of reality. Field and Labbo (1994) utilised photographs to portray actual practice of multicultural education. They explored the gap between theory and instructional practice through 'a camera metaphor' analysis of photographs. Legge and Smith (2014) in their study applied 'photo-elicitation of selected photographs' to represent students' experiences and teachers' practices to examine critically New Zealand teacher education outdoor education pedagogy. Kilia, Zacharos, and Ravanis, (2015) assumed "photographs as sources of information about space" (p.164) in their study.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, I had no intention of collecting photos. When I was visiting the first school, I took a few pictures of the school physical facilities, classroom teaching-learning and seating arrangements. Later I found the importance of these photos when I started my initial analysis of the data I gathered from this school. The photograph told me about the complex pedagogical practice and context of the school in terms of inclusive education (see figure 6, image 6 & 7). Afterwards, I continued my effort to capture photos in other schools. It seemed to me that few photographs might allow the readers to visualise the context and practice of the school.

I took photographs myself during my visits to the schools. Such snapshots only represent the context at a particular time. In my research, I incorporated some pictures besides describing the cases, because the photograph "is visual in the way it relates to the world" (Schratz, 1993, p.73). However, I was very careful not to express the identity of participating schools in the photograph. In this case, I had to blur the face and any mark or name of the school in the photo. An English proverb says, "a picture is worth a thousand words" and a notion of a complex idea can be presented only by a picture. The figure 6 consists of seven photos that show some of the challenges for Bangladesh education system to be inclusive. Despite the policy expectations, the photographs show what is actually happening in the schools. Photos one to six illustrate how difficult it is for a school to be accessible for children with disabilities, and photo seven presents the teaching-learning practices. Teacher conducted his session only with a textbook and followed traditional teaching learning strategies.



Image 2. When I was going to visit the last school



Image 1. The Street nearby a school during a typical monsoon day in Dhaka



Image 3. School entrance by a busy city street

Photo tells the challenges of implementing inclusive education



Image 4. The unhealthy drinking water and Inaccessible toilet



Image 5. A road to school access without a footpath



Image 6. Most of students have to cross the state highways to enter the school



Image 7. Typical teacher-centric teaching and learning in the classroom

Figure 6. Photography speaks: Realities of schools' context

Reflective journal and field notes

During my field work, I maintained a diary to write everything that happened in the field and I also took field notes. My notes varied from *jottings to formal narratives* (Yin, 2003) as well as my reflections. Yi (2008) identified sixteen purposes of the educational use of diaries that can be categories under three broad groups: pedagogical purposes, course evaluation and basic research. Alam (2106) extensively utilised his research journal for recording the research process, “how the project was initiated and how participation, engagement and the research process evolved” (p.30). My principal purpose was to carry out the field research systematically. I kept a diary throughout the study for recording my observation of experiences over a period of data collection, and it became a source of rich qualitative data for my research. Furthermore, maintaining a diary became a valuable exercise during data collection and helped me to be self-critical and self-reflective, as well as contributed to recording insights into the

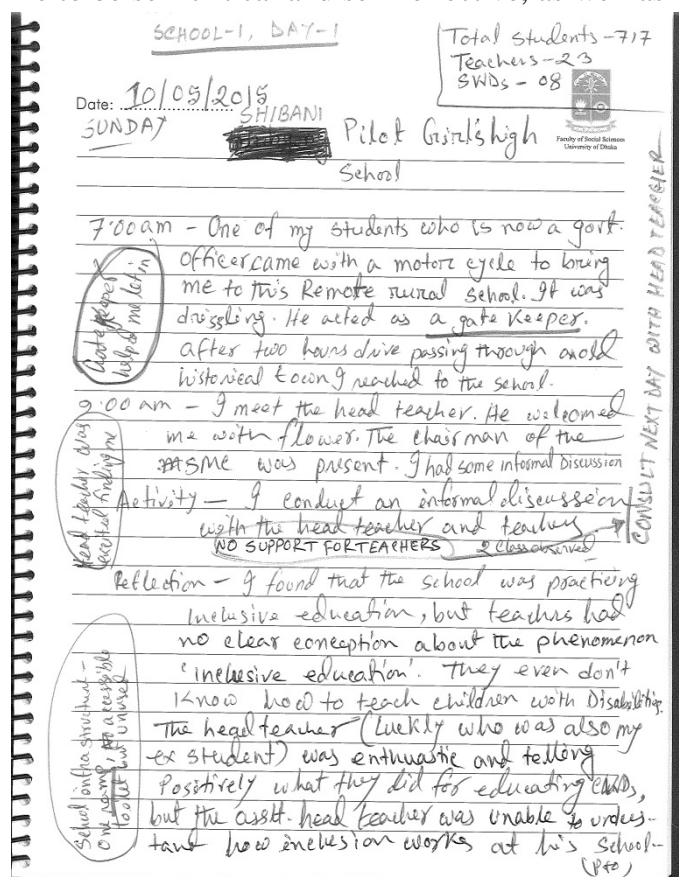


Figure 7. Field notes: From the pages of my research diary

research process. I recorded what I did, how well certain activities (tools) worked, how the participants or I felt about the actions, what information I found, what are the possible explanations of that information. I utilised both long reflective journal entries and short 'memos-to-self'. The following figure gives an example how journal entry was used in my research.

The usefulness of this simple piece of writing was immense in the analysis. It guided me for the following day's data collection and raised the issues of having no support system available for teachers teaching children with disabilities. More significantly, the

concept of 'blind men and the elephant' was developed for the first school chapter.

In this way, the diary helped me to keep track of my research chronology and supported me in looking back at what I actually observed in the schools. It became an essential element of

analysis; otherwise I might have excluded some crucial ideas and experiences of participants. The diary also supported me in creating a list of key issues and questions which the research had highlighted and which still needed further follow-up. I used a research diary in the field for different purposes. Hopking (2008) argued that researchers should take field notes to illustrate case study. In my research, I took field notes in my reflective journal either while the field activity was in progress or immediately after my return from the school. They provided the general impression about the problem and documented all significant aspects of my field data collection.

I would note the statements that seemed important for my research. For example, I wrote down an expression I received during an interview with the assistant head teacher of Dhaka Damayanti High School. He said, “My idea is not clear enough, I think that teaching disadvantaged or children from poor families may create problems in the classroom”. I also noted the context of his statement. When the issues of poverty came, then I asked him about the relationship between poverty, exclusion and pedagogy. During my analysis, such notes helped me to travel back to the context.

Organising, analysing and interpreting data

As a qualitative study, data analysis started from the inception of the project and continued up to the submission of final thesis (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). This study relies on inductive reasoning in organising, analysing and interpreting of data and takes a position that “an interpretive understanding is only possible by way of uncovering or deconstructing the meanings of a phenomenon” (Thorne, 2000, p.68). It was important to structure the meanings that derived from data as gathered from a verity of sources. The analysis had two fragments: policy document analysis and analysis of lived experiences as collected through interviews, consultations and observations. The policy text analysis began from the beginning of the study, whereas analysis and interpretation of lived experiences begin as data was collected because qualitative research allows to collect and analysis data simultaneously (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Stake, 2010). The initial tool for analysis was my reflective journal.

Analysis model: *Critical Eye of analysis*

For all types of analysis the notion of criticality was applied. Thus, the analysis incorporated a critical lens that was developed by a modification of the process of criticality as proposed by Greenwood (2013), as shown in figure 8. She argued that “Criticality is the function that allows us to examine our creative ventures. We might look at how they match our goals, how they

relate to what has already been explored, how they are perceived by others, how they relate to a particular theory or view of the world, and what the consequences might be.” (p. 38).

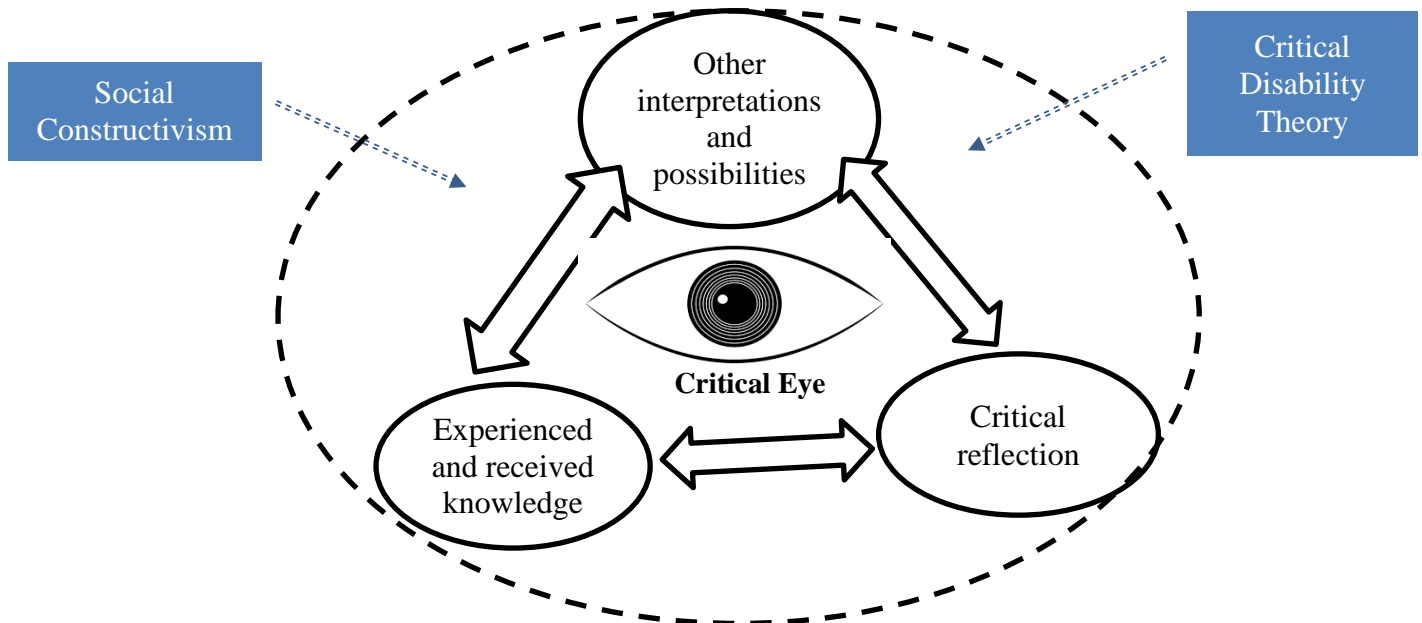


Figure 8. Critical lens of analysis

(Adopted from the process of criticality of Greenwood, 2013, p.39)

Therefore, the central element of this analysis was criticality to unpack data in relation to its embedded values in constructing and deconstructing knowledge. Greenwood asserted that “criticality is a process by which we consider our experience and evaluative judgement of things against some other yardsticks” (2013, p.38). In this analysis model, *Social Constructivism* and *Critical Disability Theory* were utilised as such yardsticks to evaluate or judge the data in accordance with my research objectives. Moreover, the existing literature was used to support or verify the concept that emerged from data. This analysis model shows that the analysis process is interactive and continuous. Researcher experiences are the primary measures of making decisions about any set of data. However, our experienced realities may change through incisive reflection and can form a shared expertise. Thus it is necessary to carefully consider the value of data, and it requires an active engagement for constructing meaning. In this case, perhaps deconstruction of existing meaning may perhaps be supportive for making new meaning. Then the model suggests dealing with other possibilities and multiple interpretations of data, because “the layering of the different perceptions might produce a clash of realities and that would itself be a catalyst for critical reflection, but the best value comes from making for explicit and deliberate consideration of the changes in understanding that are occurring” (p.39-40). In fact, the model assumed that collaboration is essential for constructing

new knowledge, and thus put the utmost importance on having multiple sources for collecting data on a specific phenomenon, as Greenwood asserts, “the various participants bring different insights, sometimes different values, to the decision and decision making” (p.40). An example of how the lens contributed in the analysis is shown below.

For example, every data in this research was looked by a critical eye to construct the actual meaning for this investigation. The head teacher of Shibani Pilot Girl’s High School during a professional consultation talked about the achievement or performance of children with disabilities in relation to their non-disabled classmates and said, “Though I am happy with their [students with disabilities] results, it is still below than the average”. At a surface level, there is no problem with this statement as the school documents support it. However, applying the ‘critical eye’ gave a different interpretation regarding the existing inclusive education. The head teacher accepted the low achievement of students with disabilities, but my professional experience says different things, it may be for the unsupportive teaching and learning practices. Thus, it directs me my critical reflection, and lead me to ask, “is it the child’s fault, or are other factors related with their underachievement”. Then the lens directs use other interpretation and possibilities. Then I looked to the literature, as I found that “good teaching is central to improving the achievement of high school students” (Iowa State Dept. of Education, 2005). This research finding helped me to think alternatively, to consider that an absence of sound inclusive teaching practices in the school might be a reason. Then, I put my emphasis to search other sources to get an explanation. I suddenly discovered a statement from the school managing committee president about the (dis)ability of students that “They might do well if we could provide a stimulating learning atmosphere”. Such comparisons and contrasts encouraged me reaching an overarching theme: “what constitutes success for students with disabilities in the mainstream classroom?” On the basis of this critical lens, the analysis of this study followed a number of steps that are described below.

Practical steps followed in analysis

A number of steps were followed to organise and analyse data obtained from professional conversations, observations and interviews. The following section describes how I analysed data and presented it in the thesis.

Transcription

All the interviews and professional conversations were conducted in Bangla because it was assumed that interviewing through the mother language would provide more natural accounts of participants. The first step of my analysis was the transcribing the interviews and observation

data. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Hycner (1985) perceived transcribing as the first step of analysing interview data that “includes the literal statements and as much as possible noting significant non-verbal and para-linguistic communications” (p.280). In transcribing, I put importance on every statement made by the participants, as Krathwohl (2009) argued that every participant has something valuable to offer to our understanding of our complex social world (p.621). After transcribing, I sent the original transcription for the interviewees’ opinion. They had the scope to add or subtract any statement as they thought important. Such transcription was visited and revisited again for accuracy. Thus every statement could be considered equally in the analysis.

Immersion in the data

I immersed myself in the data from when I had started to collect them. After transcribing, I became more engaged with analysis. I read, listened and review the data over and over again. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) justified doing this as it helps to understand the underlying idea of gathered data “at both gut level and as a whole”, before begin to analyse it (p.420). Such immersion in the data supported me to understand and sense the whole of the data before starting the formal analysis process.

Reduction of the data through a ‘Critical Eye’

The study produced a large volume of data through professional conversations, interviews and observations. The critical eye model helped me to reduce the data which I gathered from interviews and observations that was not related to my current research. For example, in the initial transcription of an interview, a head teacher was talking about the role of his school in empowerment of local women, but that was not my research focus. That is why I eliminated that statement from my analysis. In this process, I listened to each recording several times to develop my understanding. Then I judged every statement in relation to the research questions by my experiences. Then I made a critical reflection on the relevance of the statement to my research.

Critical listening to the selected portion of interview again for a whole

After reducing the statements or concepts that were not related to my current research, I did listen to the audio recording tape again and again, and also I carefully read the transcription several times. The main purpose was to ensure that I had not cut off any important, relevant statements. It helped me to formulate a solid unit of contextual understanding and, later, themes. I also looked for the silences as well as non-verbal cues as reflected in the transcribed

or audio-taped. A critical eye supported me to construct meaning for such silence or non-verbal communications.

Translating the transcriptions

I translated into English only those portions of the transcriptions of observations, interviews and conversations that I considered relevant to my research. All the interviews and professional conversations were conducted in Bangla which is the mother tongue of both interviewer and interviewees, and it was assumed that interviewing in the mother language would provide more comfort to participants' expression of natural accounts. In translating the selected portion of the transcription, a number of steps were taken to ensure accuracy of meaning, like peer-checking and member checking. I sent some sample translated passages to two of my Bangladesh colleagues who were working with me at the university and have proficiency in academic English. Moreover, I had also sent a sample to four participants (the head teacher of Ttajasbita School and College, Sharifa who was an English language teacher of Dhaka Damayanti High School, Kabir who is working with a development organisation, and Tahmida who worked with the education board in Bangladesh) who had an acknowledged competency in English. I received positive feedback from all of them about my translation sample.

Constructing the general meaning of the text

At this stage, I again read each and every word of the translated portion of the transcription for constructing a general meaning from my research perspectives. For example, the general meaning was noted for statements, as the following conversation (shown in Table 7) emerged in a group interview where participants were asked to express their opinion on "how educators teach children with disabilities and how they understand that the students could understand the lesson they taught".

Table 7.
Units of general construction of meaning

Statements	General meaning
Alimuzzaman: I ¹ conduct the class for all students, ² not for student with disabilities.	¹ conducting class for all students ² not for students with disabilities
Jesmin Ara: ³ By Observing their (students with disabilities) responses, but ⁴ I can't recognise whether they ⁵ respond with understandings or not.	³ Observation of children with disabilities by classroom teacher ⁴ Teacher cannot recognise ⁵ Students with disabilities could understand the lesson
Hossain: it is not ⁶ possible to ask questions ⁷ one by one to all in the class.	⁶ asking question in the classroom; ⁷ every student
Juthika: Usually, I do not ⁸ expect high from most students with disabilities.	⁸ Teacher's low expectation to children with disabilities

Identifying overarching themes

Savin-Baden and Major (2013) asserted that “A theme is a unifying or dominant idea in the data and finding themes is the heart of the data analysis process” (p.427). Critically reviewing all the general meanings that emerged across the data from each school, the key themes of the each story were selected. The professional conversations were grouped under key themes of contextualised inclusive education, policy aspiration in terms of globalisation and its influence, the complexities and challenges of policy implementation and strategies. From the very beginning of my data collection, I focused on exploring the big themes, as well as emergent issues in each school case. All the data from a respective school supported me reaching to an overarching theme. For example, at Shibani Pilot Girl’s High School, I found that the head teacher was saying something different from what teachers were saying regarding the education of children with disabilities. I reviewed individual transcriptions of the interviews with the head teacher, assistant head teacher, and group interviews with teachers, interviews with parents, participant observations of classroom teaching, direct observations of schools, and informal discussion with students and the SMC president. Then I constituted the overarching theme as ‘disconnection between idealism and practice’. After critical reflection on all the transcriptions with a support of my field notes, I identified the emergent issues in the school: Inclusion as *education for all*; Limited understanding and confusion in teachers; and Lack of parental engagement. In this way, through interviews with various stakeholders, professional conversations, analysis of critical review of documents, and participant observations, I developed a “case description and case based themes” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73) related to policy and practice of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Bangladesh mainstream secondary schools. In seeking to provide rich descriptions of the complexity within practices, the study addressed the pre-defined research questions.

Analysis of policy documents

The critical eye lens supported my understanding the documents. The analysis utilised content analysis that “examines the presence of concepts in texts” (Mathison, 2005). It considered Morton’s (2010) suggestions: what is deemed important enough (by whom) to be worth collecting?, What is omitted?, and What is assumed?. Through a critical eye lens, I intended to examined the actual point made by these policies and analysed them at three levels to see whether the policy made a practical suggestion or idealised recommendations. The three tiers include concrete planning, overreaching intention and reflection of international ideology.

Presentation of data

Analysis of data from the case studies was inductive in the first instance and organised around the themes that emerged from the interviews and observations. Afterwards, the findings from the case studies were read against the content of policies and the reported perceptions of the policy stakeholders that have been interviewed. How the global, inclusive educational policy matched (or mismatched) public policy was a factor in the analysis, as was how the teachers of secondary schools adopted aspects of policies in their classroom practice. Narrative accounts of teachers and policy administrators were crafted throughout the study findings as the primary source of reflecting on the global influences on practices.

Trustworthiness and rigour

Specific measures have been undertaken to ensure validity, reliability, rigour and trustworthiness in this research. Introducing data from different sources allow me to cross-check to ensure rigour and trustworthiness. The use of a wide samples, participants from a wide range of geographical settings, application of multiple tools, scope to compare and contrast data, and data triangulation have been considered in this regard. The current research embraced all the four aspects of trustworthiness as identified in the literature (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; 1989). These four areas are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Careful design of the study and methods of data analysis were the first step. Credibility was addressed by comprehensive and well-linked accounts where areas of uncertainty were identified. Rich contextual information supports transferability, as explained by Shenton (2004) that the transferability in the qualitative research "... provide sufficient detail of the context of the fieldwork for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting" (p.63). The research tools, which were used in this research, were prepared to seek the answers to the research questions, thus ensure face and content validity.

Peer-checking and member checking were other approaches to ensure trustworthiness. Copies of the transcribed interviews and contextual descriptions were sent to the respective participants for member-checking. Besides, a verbatim transcription of the individual consultation data was sent to respective individual participants. Each participant was requested to examine the transcribed descriptions carefully and encouraged to search for any inconsistency. They were asked to make additions and make corrections if necessary. By this process, their final checking of the descriptions validated their information. Peer-checking gave

me an idea about the quality of the data that emerged from interviews or other qualitative sources.

A few verbatim transcriptions of interview data were shared with my colleagues (PhD students, University faculty members and professional friends) for their feedback. Their feedback was considered during data analysis. Moreover, the findings were reviewed at the end of data collection.

Data triangulation

In the field of social research most of the data obtained are subjective or qualitative in nature (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Triangulation is thought of as a way to verify or validate such data (Bogdan & Taylor, 1998). It is important that the information from other sources is also collected so as to check the validity of finding from the previous source. When data extracted from two or more independent sources and are used to come to the same general conclusion is termed triangulation. The use of triangulation ensures conclusions are more valid (Cohen & Manion, 1994). A further factor to consider is that, while using only one method, it is difficult to measure the validity and reliability of the method accurately. It is, therefore, a useful safeguard to use different techniques in research to establish adequate validity and reliability. Therefore, this qualitative case study research consisted of multiple methods, and a two-step data triangulation process was followed (as shown in figure 9).

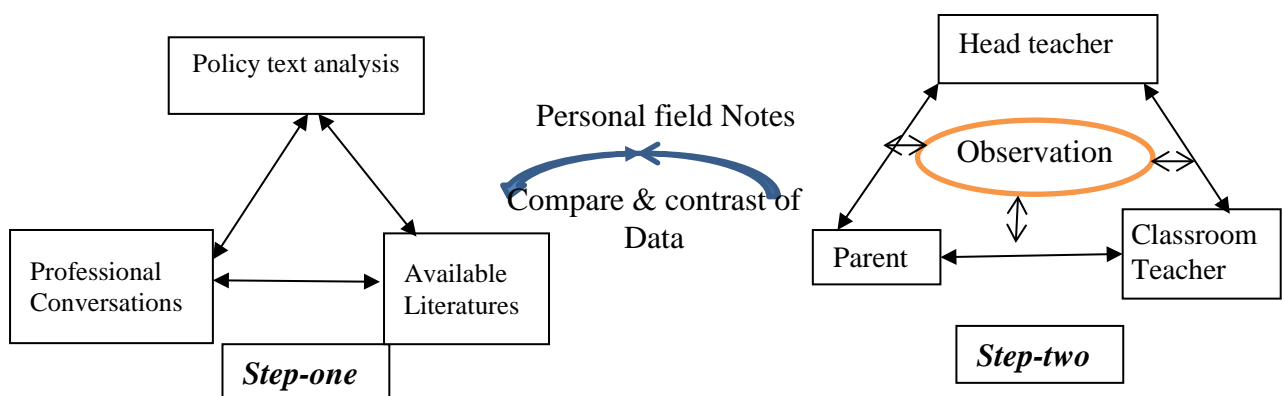


Figure 9. Data triangulation process

Ethical issues

The entire research processes, from design to reporting, considered the ethical means to ensure that "this work is conducted with appropriate regard for ethical standards and cultural values" (University of Canterbury, 2014, p.1). The study adheres to the guidelines of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (ERHEC) and followed the standards in terms

of ethics as described by the ERHEC of University of Canterbury throughout the process. Thus this study obtained full ethical approval from ERHEC.

Novikov and Novikov (2013) explored the foundations of research ethics from historical perspectives of human civilisation. They asserted that morality is the basis of all human activities organised according to moral norms. This states the essence of ethical consideration in research. As Novikov and Novikov (2013) argued the norms of scientific ethics should consider two aspects in a research: internal ethical norms (in the community of researchers) and external ethical norms (as a social responsibility of researchers for their actions and consequences) (p. 31). Merton (1942 as cited in Novikov & Novikov, 2013) explained that ethical norms within a scientific community should consist of four values. These are the universalism (knowledge is universal), communism (a common asset for humankind), organised scepticism (seeking for truth without mercenary motives), and disinterestedness (responsibility to ensure the quality of findings).

Ethics affirms the importance of taking informed consent before collecting data from a human source (Elense & Peshkin, 1993; Davidson & Tolich, 1999; Tolich, & Davidson, 1999). Thus, informed consent was obtained before conducting individual professional consultations and interviews. Anonymity, confidentiality and the assurance of voluntary participation were followed as guiding principles. In all cases, participant names (individual or institutions) were linked to an identity code, and actual names were stored securely (e.g., in a spreadsheet with password protection and locked filing cabinet). Strategies for using pseudonyms were considered in writing up of the findings and the production of the final report. An information letter was prepared to cover all of the ethical guidelines of ERHEC of the University of Canterbury (see Appendix 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15 as samples). The participants were informed regarding the legal use of findings. The participants were requested to participate voluntarily. Moreover, the information letter clearly indicated the procedures for treating data. In this way, participants' safety was ensured. Thus, the explanatory statements within the consent letters enabled potential participants to decide whether or not to participate in the research. Confidentiality was considered as paramount handling data.

Two forms of power relationships emerged in my research. The first one was between me and the participants, as my status was the teacher/educator for many of my participants. In this respect, I focused on building rapport and trust. Moreover, my awareness of Bangladeshi culture and customs supported me in creating a friendly atmosphere. The second one was power relationship within the schools that I visited. It was between the principals and staff. For

example, in Chapter five, during my visit, when the head teacher took over the class showed that principal hold more power. I dealt with these by simply recording them as data.

Chapter Four

Policy Conversations and Interconnectedness:

An Analysis of Local and Global Policy Texts on Disability and Education

Introduction

This chapter provides a critical analysis of Bangladesh policy documents related to education and disabilities. This includes summary and consideration of the core concepts of Bangladesh disability policy with a particular focus on education, and describes the relationship between the realities for children with disabilities and the expectations created by current policies. This chapter aims to answer the first research question of this study, “*What are the government policies on meeting the education needs of students with disabilities in secondary schools in Bangladesh and how do these align with global policies on inclusive education?*” The international focus of providing education for children with disabilities is encouraging policymakers in many countries to prioritise educational reforms targeting children with disabilities. At the forefront of these reform agendas is the inclusive education movement, which is now stipulated in several global policy texts. For example, *Education for All Declaration* (UNESCO, 1990), the *Salamanca Statement* (UNESCO, 1994), the *United Nations (UN) Conventions on Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UN, 2006).

The expectations of global agencies and personal interconnectedness permeate many aspects of life within Bangladesh. The allure of economic benefits linked to globalisation has seen Bangladesh national policies being influenced by global agencies. It is therefore difficult to avoid global influences at a policy level; however there is a risk that global influences may overshadow the understanding of regional and local contextual needs. It must be remembered that “literacy without a global perspective limits our understanding of our lives and communities and restricts the possibilities for building lasting change” (Pike, 2008, p.227). As a result, it is essential to consider the characteristics and needs of local contexts when attempting to balance these with the expectations of global education policies. An in-depth consideration and understanding of the influences of global policy, especially how it is affecting education, is needed.

Inclusive education is a specific example of the influence of global policies on Bangladesh's national educational policy and practices. An important question to ask is 'how it works for the nation?' Verger, Novelli and Altinyelken (2012) analysed the complex process of recontextualisation of global policies at the individual country level and explored the effects on educational governance. They identified that international organisations or donor agencies are perceived to be interfering (both materially and ideologically) to set agendas and country priorities for developing countries. This finding implies a possible mismatch between global policy and local needs and practices. It also suggests that consideration of local practices is rarely considered when translating global policies to local contexts, resulting in complexities and challenges. Current global policies advocate for the provision of inclusive education at all levels of the education system, but no independent research describes the alignment and influence of global policies on Bangladesh policy and practices in terms of education and disabilities. Thus, this section considers how global policies have impacted on local policies through an analysis of contents.

This chapter contrasts three specific policies. The global policy considered is the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006* (UNCRPD) (UN, 2006). The local disability policy is the *Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013* (RPPDA) and the *Bangladesh National Education Policy 2010* (NEP) (MoE, 2010) as the local education policy. This chapter also explores how other Bangladesh policies interrelate and interact with each other with regards to education for children with disabilities. The policy issues are presented in three parts: i) Bangladesh perspectives and policies supporting inclusive education; ii) global perspectives and policies supporting inclusive education; and, iii) a comparison of global and local policies.

Part A. Bangladesh policy perspectives of inclusive education: A synthesis

This section explores existing policies that influence the provision of education for children with disabilities. In particular, antecedents and philosophical standpoints involved in developing such policies are discussed. A careful examination of policy wording explores both intended and unintended focuses of each policy and how these are inter-related.

Understanding Bangladesh policy perspectives

Bangladesh is a land of abundance and contradictions when considering the availability of education policies. Since gaining independence in 1971, successive Bangladesh governments have attempted to address the educational issues for children with disabilities. The country's

social justice movement has provided voice and support for a comprehensive national education policy. The first attempts to formulate a national educational policy can be traced to a time soon after independence with the publication of the *Qudrat-e-Khuda Education Commission Report* (MoE, 1974). This report recommended an integrated approach and collaborative effort to provide an appropriate education for children with disabilities. However, the major recommendations of the report were not implemented and no steps were taken in regards to education for children with disabilities for many years.

Successive governments have established education commissions and committees to provide recommendations for educational policy reforms. With each change in dominant political party, new policies have been developed, with minimal attention to policy implementation. For example, the 1979 *Interim Education Policy*, followed by the *Mofiz Uddin Education Commission* in 1988, the *Shamsul Haque Education Policy Development Committee* in 1997, a *Revised National Education Policy* in 2000, the *M. A. Bari Education Commission* in 2002, the *Moniruzzaman Mia Education Commission* in 2003, and finally the most recent *National Education Policy* in 2010. Bangladesh has also formulated a diverse range of policies that influence the education of children with disabilities.

The UNCRPD (UN, 2006) has become an influential global policy document intended to influence member states to undertake various measures to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities. The right to access and participate in education is clear in the UNCRPD. The convention also imposes a legal responsibility on the state parties to enact legislation and national-level policies. Therefore, Bangladesh has recently developed laws and formulated policies aimed at accomplishing the UNCRPD's provision particularly in reference to the provision of education for children with disabilities. According to the binding UNCRPD directives, Bangladesh developed new rights-based legislation for persons with disabilities that demonstrated a shift in education from *special* to *inclusive* discourses. Bangladesh's parliament passed a law in 2013 titled *The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act* (RPPDA). Although the global and local policies, and legislative instruments above are focused on the rights of persons with disabilities, these also contain significant implications for educational reforms within Bangladesh.

A UNICEF (2003) study explored the concepts of special, integrated and inclusive education among educational professionals in Bangladesh. The study reported the difficulty in finding a single approach described in the country's policies. While one policy specified special education, another policy provided directives for integration or inclusion. The root of such

policy paradoxes lies in the socio-political and economic context of the country. Due to the insufficiency of reliable and consistent data on the magnitude and educational status of children with disabilities, it becomes difficult to comprehend the problem and thus provides challenges for policy-makers and educators. Poverty is cited as a consequence of disabilities in Bangladesh and limiting the access of children with disabilities to schools because of its latent cost (UNICEF, 2003).

The enactment of contradictory legislation and policy is somewhat perplexing. However, a recent address by the Chief Justice of Bangladesh Mr Surendra Kr Sinha shed some light on how legislative processes could lead to contradictory outcomes. He spoke about the inherent weakness of the law enacting process in the Parliament of Bangladesh. In an address at Dhaka University, he stated, "...One thing hurts me a lot when I see a new law or amendment to the constitution which is being discussed in the legislature but actually not about them. The parliamentary debate is not so healthy as to be able to understand the purpose of the law when it is enacted. As a result, the practice of law in the legislature is gradually getting weaker" (The Daily Prothom Alo, 2016a). Critiquing the lawmakers for their "lack of interest" in assessing the merits of a proposed law, he further said, "The biggest thing about our lawmakers is their ignorance about laws" (The Daily Star, 2016b). However, as well as ignorance, a tendency to disregard the evidence and lack of understanding of the law by lawmakers is relatively common in developing countries such as Bangladesh. It seems clear that there is an inherent weakness in the process of passing legislation in the Bangladesh Parliament. Therefore, contradictory policies need to be traced to their sources if the intention is to bring children with disabilities into education.

The sources of Bangladesh policies

Bangladesh education policies must align with the country's constitution which was adopted soon after independence in 1972. The constitution was written in order to ensure social justice for all citizen. It consists of 18 (out of 153) articles that relate to the fundamental state policy and 22 articles focused on fundamental rights. However, the Constitution of the Republic is the source of all policies of the state. For example, Article 7(2) states, "This Constitution is, as the solemn expression of the will of the people, the supreme law of the Republic, and if any other law is inconsistent with this Constitution that other law shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be void." (GoB, 1972). Therefore, any policy related to education and development must be formulated with consideration of the constitutional directives. A review of the Constitution identified two types of obligatory directives. These were policy-specific guidelines and general

directives for all state policies. Five articles of the constitution could be considered directives and another five articles considered for guiding development of policy frameworks. All directives for policy development are included in annex-1 of the constitution.

The constitution includes four foundation pillars of the state that must be considered when developing all legal documents. These are known as the principles of nationalism, social justice, democracy, and secularism. The Constitution states that these four principles be the fundamental principles that inspired the Bangladesh population to participate in the nation's liberation war. The preamble of the Constitution includes “it shall be a fundamental aim of the State to realise through the democratic process a socialist society, free from exploitation, a society in which the rule of law, basic human rights and freedom, equality and justice, political, economic and social, will be secured for all citizens” (GoB, 1972, p.1). Therefore, any policy for educating children with disabilities also needs to hold the above fundamental values.

Article 17 of the Constitution is the basis of all policies related to the education system. This article specifies that the education system should be universally available and people-oriented. This includes free access and compulsory attendance for all children up to a certain age (i.e., primary, age six to ten). Moreover, the education system must be consistent with the needs of society and aim to support an educated and motivated citizenry across generations. Education is viewed as the principal means of poverty alleviation and development of the country. Additional constitutional elements, although they do not specifically mention education, provide guiding principles for education policy development. For example, the provisions of Article 19 specify equal opportunity for all citizens; Article 27 states equality before the law; Article 28 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, religion, caste, place of birth and ethnicity; and, Article 29 stipulates equal opportunity for public employment.

In addition to the constitutional guidelines, international commitments are also a vital source for Bangladesh policies related to disability and education (Ahsan & Burnip, 2007). For example, the National Education Policy 2010 (MoE, 2010) considered the constitutional directives on creating equal opportunities for education and undertakes a rights-based framework developed by the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989). In order to align with the constitutional commitments, the reformation of the education system could be operationalised as the cultivation of human values so that citizens can contribute to the progress of Bangladesh society. Therefore, the intention behind the development of the national education policy (2010) was to develop an education system that will be "pro-people, easily available, uniform,

universal, well-planned, science-oriented and of high standard according to the constitutional directives and it will also work as a strategy to counter all problems" (MoE, 2010, p.8).

Summary of key Bangladesh legislation and policies: Education and disabilities

A review of available Bangladesh policy documents identified a number of policies that were directly or indirectly linked to supporting the development of all persons with disabilities as mentioned in the table 8. Ahsan and Burnip (2007) stated that Bangladesh is far more advanced than many other countries in enacting laws and declaration in favour of education with a special focus on inclusive education. The major policies that have direct implications for education of children with disabilities are:

- *The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPPDA) 2013;*
- *The Neuro-Developmental Disabilities Protection Trust Act (NDDPTA) 2013;* and
- *The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2010* (MoE, 2010).

Other policies that may affect the educating provisions for children with disabilities are:

- *The Compulsory Primary Education Act (CPEA) 1990;*
- *The Bangladesh Persons with Disabilities Welfare Act (BPDWA) 2001;*
- *The Non-formal Education Act (NFEA) 2014;*
- *The Children Act 2013,*
- *Disability related Combined Special Education Policy (DRCSEP) 2009* (MoSW, 2009);
- *The National Women Development Policy (NWDP) 2011;*
- *The National ICT Policy (NICTP) 2015;*
- *The National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) 2013;*
- *The Master Plan of ICT in education (2012-2021)* (MoE, 2013).

Additionally, the Ministry of Education has proposed two new policies and published draft versions for public vetting. These policies may have significant influences on the future of the education of children with disabilities. These are the *Inclusive Education Policy for Secondary Education* (proposed) [IEPSE] 2015, and *The Education Act* (proposed) 2016.

Table 8.
Synthesis of local policies in relation to disability and education

Name of policy	Goal	Implications for educating children with disabilities	Influences/ Policy aspirations	
			Global	Local
Major policies in relation to disability and education				
National Education Policy (NEP) 2010	Overhauling the national education system to meet global and local needs and challenges of the twenty-first century and also targeted at accelerating national development and poverty alleviation through education.	The policy aspiration is to ensure quality education for all, and assumes that education of children with disabilities depends on their type and degree of challenges. The policy somewhat supports inclusive education for children with disabilities, but endorsed special education for children with “severe” disabilities.	CRC 1989, Millennium Development Goals 2001 and EFA 1990.	The Constitution of Bangladesh and previous policies on education
The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPPDA) 2013	To protect rights of persons with disabilities and comply with the global document- UNCRPD 2006	The policy recommends implementing inclusive education at all levels of the education system, and also school-based supports and materials for children with disabilities.	UNCRPD 2006	The Constitution of Bangladesh; and the non-government pressure groups
The Neuro-Developmental Disabilities Protection Trust Act (NDDPTA) 2013	To establish a trust for facilitating development and protect the rights of children with specific types of disabilities collectively called as ‘Neuro-Developmental Disabilities’ (NDD).	The policy encourages a special education approach to be extended widely for children with NDDs.	The WHO-Dhaka Declaration on Autism Spectrum Disorders on July 26, 2011	The election manifesto of the ruling party; & the National Children Policy 2011 (Article 6.9. Special Program for the Autistic Children)
Related Policies				
CPEA 1990	Provision of free primary education and compulsory for all children from the age of six to ten	The doorways of primary schools are to be opened for all including children with disabilities. The beginning of a movement	The World Declaration on EFA 1990	Compliance with the Article 17 of the Constitution

Name of policy	Goal	Implications for educating children with disabilities	Influences/ Policy aspirations	
			Global	Local
		towards systematic inclusion at mainstream primary.		
National Children Policy 2011	To ensure the overall development of children, with an emphasis on protecting the interests of all children including children with disabilities	The policy supports mainstream education, and maintains the option of special education for children who cannot be mainstreamed due to the severity of their disability. An emphasis on child-friendly lessons at schools to ensure quality education for all.	UNCRC 1989	Comply with the Article 28(4) of the Constitution that focused on making specific provisions concerning the advancement of the children
BPDWA 2001 [repealed by the RPPDA in 2013]	As the first disability-specific legislation in the country, the motto was to ensure welfare of and provide specific benefits for persons with disabilities	The act supports a special education approach, but also encourages integration to mainstream contexts when possible.	UN Standard Rules on the equalisation of opportunities for persons with disabilities 1994 & the UNASCAP disability decade 1993-2002	The Constitution of Bangladesh, and the National Disability Development Policy 1995
NFEA 2014	To create a second chance for the education of children and adults who were had not participated in formal education school by age 14	Specialised non-formal education for children with special needs with a provision of specialised instruction.	EFA 1990 and MDG 2000	NEP 2010 and Constitutional Commitments
Children Act 2013	To eliminate child labour and protect the rights of every child in the country. Thus recognising the need to implement the UNCRC	May protect children with disabilities from deprivation and exploitation and may support education opportunities	Comply with the UNCRC 1989	The Constitution of Bangladesh; and the National Children Policy 2011
DRCSEP 2009	Countrywide expansion of special education facilities for children with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder.	The policy allocated a budget for specific special schools and also specified that special schools maintain high quality instruction.	-	The interest of the Government and The Article 9.C of the BPDWA 2001
NWDP 2011	To establish equal opportunity and rights for women through ensuring	Particular attention to eradicating disparity in education. The policy calls for extending	The CEDAW Convention 1979, the	The Constitutional commitment and women

Name of policy	Goal	Implications for educating children with disabilities	Influences/ Policy aspirations	
			Global	Local
	their equal participation in every aspect of the national development initiatives	overall assistance to ensure the rights of disabled women (Article 16.17)	Beijing Platform for Action 1995; Rio de Janeiro declarations 1992	empowerment advocacy program by various women groups
NICTP 2015	To digitise services for citizens in realising the government vision 2021 towards a digital Bangladesh	The strategic goal 1.1 advocates for creating the ICT infrastructure that will be friendly to persons with disabilities. This strategy will influence the schools to introduce disability-friendly technology. Under the universal access strategy, the policy emphasised the reconstruction of government websites to support accessibility of persons with disabilities	MDGs	Long term development vision of the Government
Master Plan for ICT in Education 2012-2021	Aligned with various goals and objectives of the NEP 2010, this plan targeted to facilitate the extensive use of ICT in education and improving the standard of education to produce skilled human resources. It also aims to eradicate existing digital divide/discrimination.	Introduces ICT for children with disabilities including disability-friendly technology in education; Digital and Braille versions of text books for children with visual impairments; Eradicates the digital discrimination from education	MDG (UN, 2000) and SDG (UN, 2015)	Comply with the NEP 2010 and realise the development goals under vision 2021 of Bangladesh government
NSDS 2010-21	To promote inclusive development to meet the challenges of economic, social and environmental sustainability of the economy	Promoting access to quality education for all children including children with disabilities and sustaining gender parity in primary and secondary enrolment. Emphasising on extending the existing special and integrated educational programmes for children with disabilities, it intends to ensure full participation and inclusion of disabled peoples in mainstream social, political and cultural lives.	MDG 2000, the Earth Summit [United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, 1992]	The long term development vision of the Government; the Sixth Five Year Plan FY2011-FY2015; the Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2010-2021 & other sectoral existing plans, policies and

Name of policy	Goal	Implications for educating children with disabilities	Influences/ Policy aspirations	
			Global	Local
				strategies of the Government
National Skills Development Policy 2011	To ensure economic and social development of the country by creating skilled, knowledgeable and innovative citizens who can respond to the challenges of the global economy	Reformation of the education system with a distinct focus on vocational and technical education to empower all individuals to access employment and ensure our effectiveness in the global market through improved skills, knowledge and qualifications that are recognised and valued across the globe. The policy confirms specialised vocational education for Children with disabilities	The International Sustainable Development Goals, the Earth Summit [United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, 1992] & the UN MDGs	The commitment of the Government; the constitutional obligations for development
Upcoming Policies (Proposed by the Government)				
IEPSE 2015 (Proposed)	Strengthening the general framework on inclusive education and translates concepts of inclusion at the secondary education level into specific activities.	The policy advocates for a quality inclusive education at secondary level to establish equal educational rights for all.	Various international conventions (e.g., UNCRRPD & UNCRC)	The National Constitution, <i>NEP 2010</i> , RPPDA 2013, The Child Act 2013, NWDP, & Children policy 2011
Education Act 2016 (Proposed)	To implement the recommendations of the NEP 2010 and reform the education system for creating citizens who will be qualified and skilled in human values.	Emphasis on partial inclusion with a provision of special education for children with severe and specific types of disabilities.	Various international declarations (e.g., SDG 2015, UNCRRPD 2006, CRC 1989, & CEDAW)	The National Education Policy 2010 and the Article 17 of the National Constitution

Thematic analysis of Bangladeshi policies: Education and disabilities

A critical examination of the major policies that have been put in place to guide Bangladesh's education system and education for children with disabilities is provided below. The aim of this review is to better understand the development and influence of these policies. The Constitution of the Republic provides the basis for all policies, and the NEP (MoE, 2010) is considered as the source of all education system reform initiatives. However, endorsement and ratification of the UNCPRD (UN, 2006) placed an obligation on the country to implement strategies for realising the rights of persons with disabilities. In accordance with UNCPRD, the RPPDA (2013) has enacted and placed a legal obligation of introducing *inclusive education* at all levels of the education system. From analysis of the policies of Bangladesh, six overarching themes emerged. These are: i) disagreement in philosophical standpoints; ii) discourses and models of disabilities; iii) definition and construction of disabilities; iv) categorising children with disabilities; v) educational approaches and provisions; and, vi) condition of teaching and learning. These themes are discussed below:

Disagreement in philosophical standpoints

It is clear from an analysis of the policies' viewpoints that there is no unique philosophical agreement due to different epistemological perspectives. Analysing the philosophical basis of Bangladesh policies, Kamal (2011) reported a mosaic of philosophical values, simultaneously expositing both socialism and neoliberalism, creating a contradiction. He termed such characteristics as a *Khichuri*¹⁴ *phenomenon*. In regard to educating children with disabilities, the Bangladesh legislation and policies have been developed from different philosophical stances. For example, the philosophy of the NEP 2010 is based on the mixture of socialistic and neoliberal philosophy. The primary goal for educating children with disabilities has been to increase enrolment. At the same time, it focused on ensuring appropriate institutional facilities for children with disabilities. Moreover, the policy approved provision of both inclusive and special education contexts. The policy advocates for inducting children with mild to moderate disabilities into mainstream education with the adoption of some support measures. The policy also recommends strengthening special education system by setting up the new

¹⁴ Khichuri is traditional Bengali dish for lunch or dinner prepared by a combination of rice, lentils, vegetables and some traditional spices.

special schools for children with severe disabilities. According to the policy, these children will be provided an efficient remedial system, special care and nursing in addition to their special schooling program.

Similar contrasting of different philosophical and conceptual approaches are present in other policies. For example, the educational provision proposed by the RPPDA (2013) appears based on the philosophy of inclusive education which is aligned with the rights-based framework of the UNCRPD (UN, 2006). Such a rights-based framework was introduced prioritising the needs of children with disabilities based on the ideas of social constructivism. In contrast, the medical model approach appears to underpin the NDDTA (2013) and its specification of special education provisions. This legislation identified disability as existing within individuals, and therefore designing education programs for specific groups of students and recommending the expansion of special education facilities for the students with neuro-developmental disabilities. Similarly, the Combined Special Education Policy (MoSW, 2009) included provision of special schooling for children with intellectual disabilities and children with autism spectrum disorder.

Discourses and models of disabilities

Analysis of the policy texts reveals different discourses relating to persons with disabilities, and subsequent models, of disability received priority in the development of different policies. For example, the BPDWA (2001) appears solely based on a Welfare or Charity Model. The RPPDA (2013) reads as based on the concept of the social model of disability. Interestingly, the recently enacted NDDTA (2013) is heavily based on the medical model of disability. The NEP (2010) presents as a mixed medical and social model of disability with the policy describing the education possibilities for children with disabilities on the basis of the discourse: dis/ability. The policy states that “education for the handicapped depends on their types and degrees of challenges” (p.51). It assumes that the students’ learning and development depends on the child’s ability, not on their environment and opportunities. The policy appears focused on deficit-discourse for specifying strategies for children with disabilities as illustrated by this statement, “These children [children with severe disabilities] are incapable of studying in the usual schooling system” (MoE, 2010, p.51). This constructs children’s lack of ability as the barrier to accessing mainstream education. This is contrary to the discourse of *disability as a social construct* (WHO & WB, 2011) which perceives that

disability is not an obstacle to success and suggests consideration of the attitudes and abilities of others, together with arrangements within the physical environment that are significant for their inclusion. Similarly, the other policies like NDDTA and special educational policies are based on the *medical model of disabilities* which assumed that disability locates within individuals (Marks, 1997). These contrast with the discourses underpinning the RPPDA (2013) and UNCRPD which suggest “disability is not an attribute of the person” (WHO & WB, 2011, p.4).

Despite the contrasts in underlying discourses, the NEP (2010) calls for taking steps to include children with disabilities in mainstream schools. The RPPDA (2013) also prohibits discrimination on the ground of disabilities (Article 37). Dalkilic and Vadeboncoeur (2016) argued that the *Capability Approach* described by Amartya Sen (1985) could enhance a new integrated framework for educating children with disabilities. They state that, "this integrated framework engages children, educators, and families in principled practices that acknowledge differences, rather than deficits, and enable attention to enhancing the capabilities of children with disabilities in inclusive educational environments" (Dalkilic & Vadeboncoeur, 2016, p.122).

The definition and construction of disabilities

Bangladesh policies define and conceptualise disabilities using a variety of language to describe persons with disabilities. This is likely to influence their, and wider society's, understanding and interactions (Haeghele & Hodge, 2016). For example, the official English version of the National Education Policy (MoE, 2010) includes the terms “the handicapped”, “acutely handicapped children”, “mental disabilities”, “blind”, “deaf and dumb”, “physically handicapped” and “mentally handicapped” (MoE, 2010, p 51). Analysis of policy text showed that most policies utilised ‘*disability first*’ terminology (i.e., disabled children) rather than *people first* terminology as argued for by Mitchell (2017).

The first legal definition of disabilities can be traced to the BPDWA (2001). This law defined disability under Article 3 (I) as –

Disability” means any person who: (a) is physically crippled either congenitally or as result of disease or being a victim of accident, or due to improper or maltreatment or for any other reasons became physically incapacitated or mentally imbalanced, and (b) as a result of such crippledness or mental

impairedness - (i) has become incapacitated, either partially or fully; and (ii) is unable to lead a normal life. (BPDWA, p. 2)

After 12 years, this legal definition has been modified by the RPPDA (2013). Article 2 (9) of the RPPDA (2013) included the value of interaction of persons and surrounding context in defining disabilities. According to the Act, disability refers to a condition of any person who is physically, psychologically, and/or mentally developmentally, sensory impaired or not functioning properly due to social or environmental barriers. Anyone who cannot take part actively in the society is considered to be disabled. Therefore, disability can be defined as the interaction between an individual's functional capacity and environmental and personal factors.

Categorising children with disabilities

Categorising children with disabilities in order to design or designate education contexts and differentiating children in terms of upbringing and abilities is evidence of a "deficit hegemonic" discourse (Hill & Rahaman, 2013). Analysis of Bangladesh policies reflects inconsistencies in categorising disabilities. The first ever legal categorisation of disabilities was made by the BPDWA (2001). It categorised disabilities into six types under the Article 3 (II). These were: i) visual impaired; ii) physically handicapped; iii) hearing impairment; iv) speech impairment; v) mental disability; and, vi) multiple disabilities. The RPPDA (2013) expanded this categorisation of persons with disabilities into 12 categories on the basis of six characteristics (Article 3). These characteristics are physical, emotional, intellectual, developmental, sensory impairment and diversified handicapping conditions. The 12 categories of disabilities as identified are:

- autism or autism spectrum disorders (ASD);
- physical disability;
- mental illness leading to disability;
- visual disability;
- speech disability;
- intellectual disability;
- hearing impairment;
- deaf-blindness;
- cerebral palsy;

- down syndrome;
- multiple disability; and,
- other disability.

(RPPDA, 2013, Article 3).

The National Education Policy further categorised children with disabilities according to levels or severity of disability, and termed as mild, semi and acutely handicapped (MoE, 2010, page 51). Interestingly, there is no reference or explanation provided for using this classification. However, the policy stated that the acutely handicapped children are those “who cannot fulfil the demands of daily life due to their physical or mental disabilities” (p.51). These categorisations have taken place despite the reported difficulties and issues (e.g., reliability, accuracy) surrounding the identification and labelling of young children (Hadadian & Koch, 2013).

Educational provisions and approaches for children with disabilities

The analysis of policies confirmed that a wide range of provisions are described and intended for supporting the education of children with disabilities. The *Children Act* (2013) places legal obligations on the Government and legitimately urges undertaking appropriate steps to ensure the development of all children (Article 89.2). Under the Act, any initiatives for children should be in the best interest of children. In this case, the *RPPDA* (2013) assumes mainstream education could serve the best interests of children with disabilities. Therefore, article 16.1 (H) of the *RPPDA* (2013) sanctioned the rights of children with disabilities to participate in an inclusive or integrated education program at all levels of the education system with appropriate supports and services. Article 16.2 (M) defined *reasonable accommodation* as a right to have access to the necessary facilities and appropriate environment in all areas of education and employment. The article includes no mention or consideration of special education or a segregated system for children with disabilities. Article 16(2) stated that no-one could perform any discrimination of their rights as stated in the Article 16(1). If violated then, in theory, it could be treated as a criminal offence (Article 36).

The *National Education policy* (MoE, 2010) conveys the principle of *multiple approaches at multiple levels*. The policy appears to sit between special and inclusive education discourses, in that it proposes to develop and extend an integrated model for educating children with disabilities. For example, the policy recommends inclusive

education at primary level, integrated approaches at all levels and special schooling strategies for children with severe disabilities. However, the policy targets the initiating of an integrated system in some selected schools, so that children with disabilities can socialise with “normal children” (MoE, 2010, p. 51). The policy also advocates for the *special education* when the child is deemed not appropriate for mainstream integrated education. Therefore the policy supports establishing separate schools and placement according to the individual special needs and in view of the differential nature of children’s disabilities (MoE, 2010, Chapter 18, p.51).

The *BPDWA* (2001) encouraged the establishment of specialised education contexts to cater for the educational needs of children with specific types of disabilities. Similarly, the *NDDPTA* (2013) also supported special education facilities for four specific types of disabilities and expressed a need for establishing sufficient numbers of schools. This has encouraged non-government organisations to establish institutes for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities. Within this Act, *special educational institution is defined in* the Article 2(14) as an institution where children with disabilities (neuro-developmental disability) are provided special types of education instead of the mainstream education. Significantly, in line with the NEP 2010, this act also advocates organising special or integrated education on the basis of the nature and severity of the disability. On the other hand, the *National Children Policy* (2011) provides recommendations for a special education system for students unable to gain entry into the mainstream education due to unavoidable circumstances (clause 6.8.3) and requires appropriate institutional support to be provided and for access to services and facilities (clauses 6.8.4 and 6.8.6).

Teaching and learning conditions

The *RPPDA* (2013) emphasised the safeguarding of children with disabilities in mainstream education. This Act introduced several critical issues to be addressed in order to ensure quality education for children with disabilities. The following provisions were to be implemented:

- Removal of physical barriers in schools, universities and other educational institutions (e.g., constructing ramps and accessible toilets);
- Unrestricted access to the institution’s services and facilities (Part 5, Schedule);

- Provision of accessible educational materials (audio and video) for children with disabilities;
- Create opportunities for increased numbers of students with disabilities in educational institutions;
- Provision of additional time and support (e.g., reader-writers) for students during public and school exams;
- Revision of the teachers' training curriculum to include coverage of disabilities;
- Provision of training to the employees of educational institutes and equipping institutes with necessary facilities;
- Introduction of Bengali sign language for the benefit those who have hearing and speech difficulties in all educational institutions and appointment of a speech-language therapist where deemed necessary.

(Part 4, Schedule)

This RPPDA (2013) introduced challenging and extensive provisions that appeared to underpin positive changes to school environments for children with disabilities. For example, by stipulating a need for accessible physical environments, schools would require significant construction activities or even re-construction in some cases (article 16.1.H). The act also provided a legal basis for considering *Bangla Sign Language* as the language of persons with hearing and speech impairment if they so choose (article 16.1.Q). To fully implement support for this will require an extensive training program for educators and administrators. Other challenging aspects for school to accommodate include identifying and supporting the needs of children with disabilities (article 16.1.H) and ensuring they participate fully and equally in school activities (article 16.1.G). Article 33 of the act specifies that no school is allowed to deny access to any child with disabilities. The RPPDA (2013) also has a significant effect on how schools support children's communication. The law provides directives to introduce multidimensional communication to meet individual needs (e.g., Augmentative and alternative communication options such as sign language, Braille, Tactile Communication, Kinesthetic communication, computer-based communication).

The *Children Act* (2013) and the *National Children's Policy* (2011) are further documents that influence the development of all national development policies, planning, programme implementation and budgeting (MoWCA, 2011, p.3). These

documents apply to all Bangladeshi children who are under the age of 18 and must be followed without discrimination. The policy emphasised the introduction of child-friendly education environments and providing counselling services in schools to support students' mental health (Article 6.6.1). As education is viewed as the key to building future generations, the documents state the need for high quality primary and secondary education for all children.

Conclusion

The policy and legislative provisions and guidelines for persons with disabilities in Bangladesh are considerable. For example, the policies stipulate access to all government and public buildings, infrastructure, transportation, health and provision of inclusive schools. However, the question of feasibility remains. How can a developing country such as Bangladesh, with limited and unequally distributed resources undertake the comprehensive and costly activities needed to implement all policies and legislation? Without procuring significant additional resources, the directives provided by the policies are likely to remain unrealised. Nevertheless, the legislative requirements will likely create some affirmative actions for the future. Meeting these requirements will undoubtedly enrich Bangladesh's functional capacity and support representation in various international forums.

Part B. Global perspectives and policies supporting inclusive education

Pursuit of the global policies on disability and education

To understand inclusive education, it is essential to examine the gradual international moves towards inclusive education. A variety of international agencies and inter-governmental groups have contributed to the development of inclusive philosophies for educating children with disabilities. Kisanji (1999) first raised the following questions with the aim of understanding the wider context of inclusive education: "How has the concept of inclusive education developed? Was it sparked off by the Jomtien Conference [or others]? Who is behind this movement?" (p.3). Globally, inclusive education appears to have evolved over time with UN-led conventions and declarations. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), World Conference on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989), the UNESCO-organised conference in Salamanca, Spain (UNESCO, 1994), the *Dakar Framework of Action* (UNESCO,

2000), and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol* (UN, 2006). Each of these events has contributed to the gradual paradigm shift from a segregated special education to the full inclusion for students with disabilities.

A historical inspection of global policies suggests that the inspiration for inclusive education has emanated from the western world. The notion and practice of educating all children in mainstream education settings gained momentum in western countries from the 1950s and reached to a global focal point in 1994 followed by the Salamanca conference (Deng, 2010). The early notion of inclusive education can be traced back to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), as Article 26 affirmed the individual right to education without distinction of any kind, and it should be focused on the fullest development of human potentials. The declaration also established the rights of parents to choose the education context for their children. The basic principles of human rights, *equality* and *non-discrimination*, that has ascended from subsequent UN texts has become a guiding element for inclusive education policy. The inclusive education movement has also been shaped by multi-sectoral initiatives. To ensure health for all, the Alma Ata declaration of World Health Organisation (WHO) formalised the notion of a community-based rehabilitation (CBR) approach (WHO, 1978) which encouraged educators and policymakers to accept the *social model of disability* and agreed upon the concept of *social inclusion* rather than *institution-based rehabilitation* for persons with disabilities. This was a notable shift toward inclusive education.

Much of the impetus for inclusive education is conveyed worldwide by various international declarations since 1990. For instance, the global goal of EFA (UNESCO, 1990) encouraged the proclamation of inclusion and set the agenda of *quality education* for all within the mainstream setting (UNESCO, 1998). This momentum has continued through to today. For instance, in 2015 the UN adopted a document titled as *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* that specifies that inclusive education be aligned with the vision of “a world with equitable and universal access to quality education at all levels” (Article 7). The provisions such “commitment to providing inclusive and equitable education at all level” (Article 25) and strategic Goal 4 clearly state the notion of inclusive education. Goal 4.a states “build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive

and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environment for all” (UN, 2015, p17).

The concept of sustainable development, which originated from *The Brundtland Commission* of the UN formed in 1983, previously known as the *World Commission on Environment and Development* [WCED] (UN, 1987), included an inspiration for educators and policymakers. While translating the concepts of the commission for education and disability, the ideas of an *ecological model of disability and education for sustainable development* (ESD) emerged. The ecological model and concept of sustainable development strongly support the potential of children with disabilities if the appropriate environment could be provided, every child could learn in the regular setting. Therefore CBR and ESD provided further impetus for reforming education for children with disabilities.

Inclusive education is now undoubtedly a United Nations-backed movement. The Salamanca Declaration (1994), which stipulated the concept of *full inclusion* at a global level, was developed by advocates and academics in North America (Hornby, 1999; Evans & Lunt, 2002). The Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (1975) and subsequent Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol (2006) are significant in promoting full inclusion. After adaptation by the UN, the UNCRPD has become a powerful international and legally binding document. The following articles impose ethical obligations on member states to move towards full inclusion: Article 3.C (under guiding principles) states, “full and effective participation and inclusion in society”; “[the state] shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning” (Article 24/1); “Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education” (Article 24/2/D) (UN, 2006). In summary, it appears that inclusive education has been established based on the idea of justice and fairness for all, and is aimed at eradicating discrimination and disparity in education. Inclusive education is also underpinned and supported by powerful global organisations and governments.

The UNCRPD: A global policy on disability and education

The UN General Assembly approved the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on December 13, 2006. The rules and regulations of the UNCRPD include 50 compulsory articles and 18 optional articles that specify equal rights for all people

including fundamental human rights such as accessible education, health, employment and equal opportunities. The convention specifically documents the protection of persons with disabilities from discrimination, negligence, persecution and torture. The content of the UNCRPD text describes the rights of individuals with disabilities as well as the actions that signatory nations can take to ensure peoples' rights. The convention considers two prior international documents, which were not legally binding treaties, the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1994) and the World Program of Action of Disabled Persons (1982). The overarching purpose of the UNCRPD is to "promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity" (UN, 2006).

The UNCRPD advocates for respect for the dignity of persons with disabilities. It firmly prohibited any distinction of persons with disabilities on the basis of their disabilities that resulted in exclusion or restriction for them participating in every aspect of life. The convention further describes the fundamental freedoms and enjoyment of life for persons with disabilities as having equal status as for citizens without disabilities. Considered as a gold standard for policy, the UNCRPD is perceived as an instrument for advancing the practice and setting a policy agenda for education. Article 24 of the covenant is especially focused on the education for persons with disabilities. It specifies the need to promote inclusive and equal education to support the development of persons with disabilities in order they fulfil their potential. It suggests that mandatory inclusive education be introduced at all levels of education system. Article 9 focuses on ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities to support their independent living and full participation by creating accessible buildings, roads, facilities, and communications. Article 20 documents the need for personal mobility and article 19 supporting their right to independent living. All of these articles have implications for the education of children with disabilities.

The UNCRPD text is written from a socio-ecological perspective. The preamble described disability as "an evolving concept and that results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (p.1). The foundation of the convention is devised around eight guiding principles. These are: i) Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom

to make one's choices, and independence of persons; ii) Non-discrimination; iii) Full and effective participation and inclusion in society; iv) Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity; v) Equality of opportunity; vi) Accessibility; vii) Equality between men and women; viii) Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and compliance with the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities (UN 2006). Article 4 of the convention imposes legal obligations on state parties to take appropriate measures to ensure people's rights including the adoption of appropriate legislative framework, and therefore imposes obligations to change or abolish existing laws, regulations, procedures, and practices that constitute discrimination against persons with disabilities. The convention also imposes an obligation on public institutions not to engage in any act or practice that is not consistent with the convention.

Part C. Global and local policies: Comparison and contrast

Bangladesh and the global policies: Alignment and challenges

Bangladesh's legislation and policies related to education and disability are heavily influenced by international policies. For instance, in the very first chapter of the National Education Policy (2010), it recognised the need for compliance with the UN Child Rights Convention that emphasised the ensuring of rights of children. In an attempt to meet Bangladesh's obligations under international law, the *Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPPDA) 2013* were enacted to comply with the UNCRPD (2006). The *Children Act 2013* (Act no 24 of 2013) is an initiative aimed at eliminating child labour and protecting rights of every child. This law meets the needs of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children (UNICEF, 1989). The preamble of the Act explicitly mentioned Bangladesh's obligations under international conventions. In the meantime, many other developed and developing countries had enacted similar laws focusing on the general wellbeing of populations with stated intentions of ensuring equal opportunities for persons with disabilities through the provision of benefits and privileges. For example, India passed similar laws in 1995, Pakistan in 1981, and Sri Lanka in 1996.

Global policies also provided specific direction to governments to undertake various measures to include children with disabilities into mainstream education. The two dominant international declarations, ratified by Bangladesh, are the *Convention on the*

Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989) and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UN, 2006). These conventions obliged governments around the world to undertake various initiatives to ensure children with disabilities had their rights recognised and supported (UNICEF, 2013). As of February 2013, the *CRC* has been ratified by 193 countries and 127 countries and the European Union (EU) had ratified the *UNCRPD* (UNICEF, 2013). Both conventions accelerated Bangladesh, along with many other countries, moving toward inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education. This has been recognised in Bangladesh legislation under the *RPPDA* (2013) and the *Children Act* (2013).

A number of international declarations support the development of national legislation and policies aimed at eradicating discrimination against children with disabilities. These include *EFA* (UNESCO, 1990), the *Salamanca Statement* (UNESCO, 1994), the *Dakar Framework for Action* (UNESCO, 2000), and the *United Nations Millennium Development Goals* (UN, 2000). Bangladesh governments have acknowledged their commitment to each of these declarations.

It appears that many of Bangladesh's education reformations are due to external influences. The focus of education in Bangladesh now appears to be adhering to global expectations and building a citizenry with a productive force that contributes to national (and global) economic progress. During the 1990s, Bangladesh implemented significant education legislation with goals of achieving universal primary education after ratifying the Education for All convention (UNESCO, 1990). Primary Education was made compulsory for all children, including children with disabilities, aged 6 to 10 years under the *Compulsory Primary Education Act* (1990). However, this law does not specify any particular approaches for addressing the needs of children with disabilities. This legislation is more focused on education for the general population, targeting for eradicating illiteracy and achieving the goal of EFA. Following the Act, compulsory primary education (CPE) was introduced on a limited scale in 1992 and then extended all over the country during 1993. A National Education for All Plan of Action (NPA) was prepared in 1995, following the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (EFA) 1990. This plan outlined the steps needed to achieve Education for All up to the year 2000. The NPA has presented objectives, targets, and strategies for primary and non-formal education. Similarly, the document NPA-II was prepared, following the

Dakar World Education Forum 2000. This plan focussed on the period from 2002 to 2015.

Global policies and funding agencies have undoubtedly influenced Bangladesh's moves towards inclusive education. Aligning with the global policy aspiration "inclusive education system at all levels" (UN, 2006, p.16), different Bangladesh policies provide a framework for inclusive education. Although the challenges in improving education programmes for children with disabilities are enormous, support for changes has been received from international organisations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, and UNESCO. These agencies have provided resources and oversight to re-organise Bangladesh's education system according to new models that "allow flexibility, multiplicity, and new ideas about ability" (Gilbert, 2005, p.7).

The UNCPRD has had a significant influence on Bangladesh policy. Bangladesh was the 91st state to sign the convention and was ratified as the 8th partner state. As a result there was an observable paradigm shift in Bangladesh policy from a welfare to rights perspective. For example, until 2013, the *Bangladesh Persons with Disabilities Welfare Act* (BPDWA) (2001) was the legislation covering the scope and opportunities for persons with disabilities. After ratifying the UNCPRD, Bangladesh enacted the law RPPDA in 2013, although this process took seven years to complete.

The influence of global initiatives is clearly seen in Bangladesh's legislation and policy for educating children with disabilities. For example, the first education policy developed in 1974 was supportive of inclusive education. Then the *National Education Policy* (2000) introduced support for a special education approach. Ten years later, the revised NEP (2010) focused on an integrated education approach for children with disabilities with the policy signposting a shift from segregated to mainstream education. Although progress has appeared somewhat slow since introduction of the NEP (2010), the Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission (BNHRC) expects that government action will gradually increase towards establishing an inclusive education system in accordance with commitment to the UNCPRD (BNHRC, 2013).

A significant challenge facing Bangladesh in establishing an inclusive education system and wider society is the notion of accessibility. The policy statements regarding provision of accessible public buildings, including educational institutions, public service centres, roads and transportation for persons with disabilities, are ambitious.

For example, a recent statistic suggests only 12% of secondary schools have a ramp to support movement of students with physical disabilities and few schools have accessible toilets for children with disabilities (BANBEIS, 2016). It is also relevant to note that 95% of secondary schools are effectively privately funded and managed. This raises the question: how do they ensure accessibility for children with disabilities? It is not clear how additional resources will be generated or allocated to implement accessibility provisions under legislation underpinned by the UNCRPD.

Although the UNCRPD emphasises on accessibility and has ensured personal mobility, Bangladesh policy is silent in this respect. No specific strategies or timeline are noted, perhaps due to the general inaccessibility of communities in Bangladesh. For example, a recent study reported that 44 per cent of the streets in Dhaka do not have pedestrian access or footpaths (The Daily Prothom Alo, 2016_b). Approximately 82% of footpaths are in a hazardous condition and 79% of people surveyed reported the speed of vehicles as unsafe for pedestrians. These difficulties are compounded during the wet season 109when all major cities and communities experience flooding (see Figure 10). Similarly, public transportation in Bangladesh is far from accessible. This includes the volume of services available. According to newspaper reports, there were around 11,000 buses in Dhaka during the 1990s when around seven million people lived in the city. Currently with a population of 15 million, Dhaka is serviced by around 4,000 buses (The Daily Star, 2015). As a result, thousands of persons with disabilities are either unable to travel or forced to discontinue their journeys.



Two city roads in Dhaka: How persons with disabilities could move during monsoon.



Peoples fight to get into city transport: A usual picture in Dhaka



Muddy road/ walkway in a rural area during monsoon



Rainwater in front of the national parliament, the most privileged area of the country



During my data collection, when I was crossing a road by Rickshaw, I found a person with a disability was lying down due to the inaccessible road

Figure 10. Photograph: Public transportation and issue of accessibility

Response to policy: From local to global

As education is considered critical to a country's development, education policy formation is now part of the political process (Abbott, 2015). In Bangladesh, like many other countries, global influences arguing for a change in education have resulted in complex intermingling of national and global pressures (Takayama, 2013). The major policies related to education and disability in Bangladesh are undoubtedly influenced by global policy. The UNCRPD was the first binding international law that places an obligation on states to ensure students with disabilities are educated in mainstream schools and have equal access to educational opportunities (Hernandez, 2008). In Bangladesh there is a mismatch between policy expectations and the availability and allocation of resources. Development partners play a vital role by injecting significant developmental aid to support policy implementation. There is a need however to ensure implementation of strategies and deployment of aid is supported by well-developed planning based on the needs of persons with disabilities. For example, no empirical study has been conducted to determine the incidence and prevalence of disabilities in Bangladesh (BNHRC, 2013). Policy and strategies without the support of evidence are unlikely to succeed.

Bangladesh policies related to education and disability include minimal acknowledgement of existing local knowledge and experiences regarding the education of children with disabilities. The policies ignore the subjective experiences of local stakeholders in local communities and classrooms around the country. Conversely, the policies contain subjective expressions from global contexts. Proposed reform of the education system appears to have blindly accepted stated international standards. The inherent national focus on social justice appears to be devalued, potentially due to the acceleration of global initiatives regarding the market economy. Therefore, policy expectations include acute contradictions with local expectations. The policies are focused on the subjectivities of global expectations about supporting learners to become competent and competitive participants in the global economy (MoE, 2010).

An important consideration for any reform of the Bangladesh education system is the fourth pillar of the constitution which focusses on socialism in terms of social justice. As a result, education policy and practice must be based on concepts of social justice. However, the dominance of external influences on national socio-political and economic development contrasts with this constitutional pillar. How these

contradictions are managed will require careful consideration. Although it appears Bangladesh policymakers are in favour of creating awareness for social inclusion, their support for inclusive education is limited towards providing access opportunities alone while ignoring the resourcing needed to implement practices. The allocation of resources is a major challenge for policy implementation as Bangladesh spends less than 3% of GDP on education (UNESCO, 2014), which is among the lowest rates globally.

Conclusion

The constitutional commitments and obligations that arise from being a signatory to many regional and international declarations are influencing Bangladesh's provision of education for children with disabilities. The challenges for the country are numerous. Particularly in maintaining a balance between local knowledge and experiences, and global expectations. Clear consideration of the Bangladesh context and the real needs and aspirations of communities, families and individuals should be the driving force for formulating policies. However, United Nations and other international conventions appear to be prioritised in the development of local policies to support education for students with disabilities. The United Nations (UN) declares the mission of education as, "considering the fundamental policy shifts required to promote the approach of inclusive education, namely enabling schools to serve all children, particularly those with special educational needs" (UNESCO, 1994, p.iii).

The policies of Bangladesh are in line with the global policy direction for full inclusion. However, considering the challenges in the local context, Bangladesh has not rejected partial integration and special education for children with disabilities. Therefore, a stance of reasonable inclusion is mentioned in various Bangladesh policies. Researchers and educators continue to question the appropriateness of moving towards full inclusion for a country like Bangladesh. Hornby (2014) argued that reasonable inclusion is more applicable for many developing countries. However, developing countries are pressurised by contemporary global political forces for moving towards full inclusion.

In this Chapter, the influence of global policies on national Bangladesh policies has revealed a contextual gap. However, the real impact of policies on the inclusive education practices for children with disabilities in Bangladesh is not yet known. The

existence of multiple policies with different focus areas and directions are likely to impede the country's progress towards inclusive education. Until contextual needs are balanced with global forces, inclusive education is likely to remain elusive for Bangladesh's children with disabilities.

Chapter Five

Blind Men and an Elephant: Teachers in the Dark about Inclusion

If we do not know about the disability that students have, how could we offer special support for their learning? - Juthika, a female teacher.

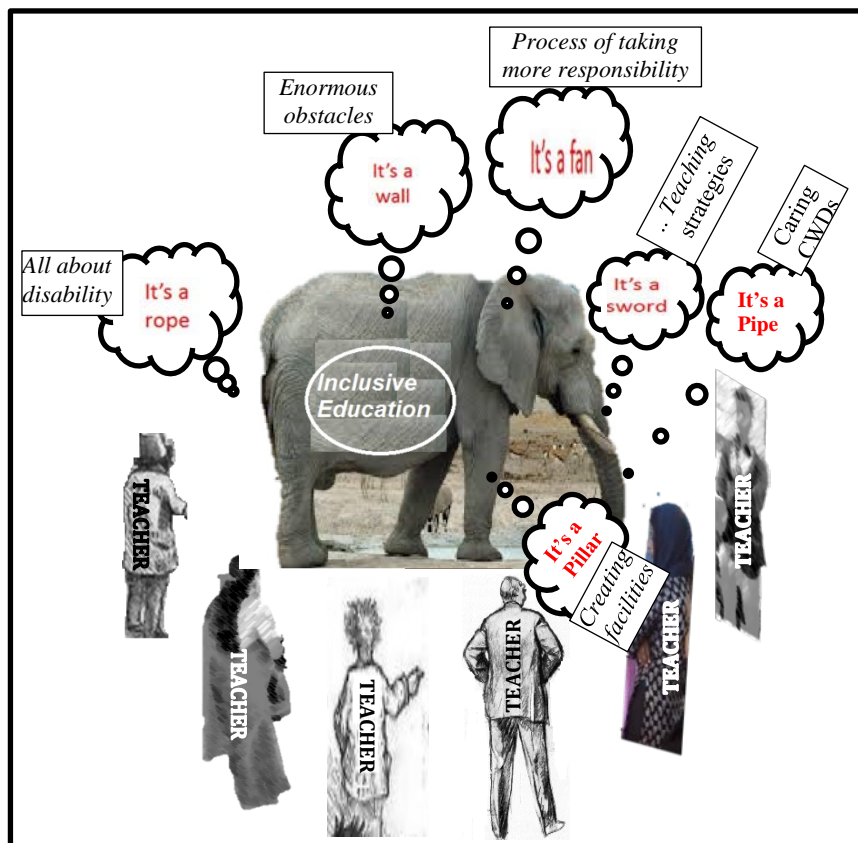


Figure 11. Elephant and blind men

n.b. CWDs stands for children with disabilities

Introduction

Inclusion of students with disabilities takes place within their families, communities, schools and wider society. The notions and practices of inclusion in schools likely mean different things to different people – teachers, administrators, peers, families and individual students with disabilities. The international literature has yet to identify a school or society that is a perfect model of inclusive education practices. Many schools, communities and societies are on their respective journeys towards more inclusive legislative, relational and physical contexts. This chapter presents the first of the five

case studies that illustrate the variety of attitudes, knowledge, experiences and practices of people who attend, work in or send their children to these high schools. Each of the schools described are at different points along their journey towards including students with disabilities. The research underpinning these cases uncovered a number of key themes around the education and inclusion of students with disabilities. An overarching theme identified in the first case study is that of a disconnect between stated aspirations of school administrators and the daily practices of teaching staff experienced by students with disabilities.

This case describes a rural high school's journey towards inclusive education through data provided from interviews with the school principal, teachers, students with disability and their families. Reflection on the data provided by participants suggests that for this school, inclusive education is comparable to the well-known fable that is famous in the subcontinent 'The *Blind Men and an Elephant*' as shown in the figure 11. This fable involves six blind men being asked to describe an elephant. Each of the men touches a different part of the elephant and then report quite different perceptions. For example, one man touches the elephant's leg then reports "A pillar", another touches the tusk reports "A pipe". Similarly in the case of this high school, the school principal reported that inclusive education was a high priority and well-practised. In contrast, most teachers had little or no knowledge of what inclusive education actually involved. The data suggests that students with disabilities were present in some classes and that teachers were sympathetic to supporting these students, but they were not sure how to go about it. Two students with disabilities, Nishi and Santi, are a focus of this chapter. The school's journey towards inclusion is illustrated through deepening our understanding of their experiences, perceptions, and goals for the future along with those of school staff, their peers and families.

Method

Access to the school

Entry to the school was supported by a *gatekeeper*. He was a government education officer for the administrative region where the school was located. The gatekeeper had been an undergraduate student in classes I taught at the University of Dhaka. He first introduced me to the school's head teacher, Tajul Islam. During our initial discussions I learned that Tajul Islam was also an ex-student of mine. He was very welcoming and

enthusiastically described the school and reported about how the school was complying with government policies on inclusive education, as he said, “We are enrolling children with disabilities, as we are on the way to inclusive education realising the vision of the government. The atmosphere and attitudes are gradually changing and now have many positive outlooks”. I will discuss this further later in this chapter. My visit to the school began at 9.00 am Sunday and lasted a total of two consecutive working days.

Data sources

The data presented in this chapter was sourced from a range of people and observations. These included a series of conversations and interviews with school staff, students and family members of students. Inspections of school records and facilities along with observations of classes and the wider school environment were also undertaken. The initial conversations were conducted with the head teacher, the president of the school’s management committee president, the assistant head teacher, Kashem. I then walked around the school observing and taking field notes about the different facilities and made observations of the school infrastructure. Six teachers (Jabbar, Alimuzzaman, Jesmin, Hossain, Khatun, and Juthika) participated in a group interview held in the staff room. I then conducted two participatory observations in classes where students with disabilities were enrolled, followed by interviews with the teachers. I then had the opportunity to have an individual informal discussion with Nishi, a student with physical disabilities, followed by an informal group conversation with three of Nishi’s peers (Meher, Akhi and Tripti). During an observation of another class, I spoke with Rabeya, another student with disabilities. At the end of the school visit, I engaged in a further conversation with the head teacher to clarify the observations I had made. Finally, I interviewed Nishs’s parents at their home to gain a broader perspective on the school’s inclusive practices.

Introducing the school: Facilities and background

General description

Shibani Pilot Girl’s High School is a private secondary school, established in 1973, located in the northern region beside an ancient city. At the time of my visit there were 717 students and 23 teachers. As the school is situated in a remote Upazilla¹⁵, far away

¹⁵ A sub-district in Bangladesh is called an Upazilla

from the district headquarters, a majority of students live in poverty with parents that are subsistence farmers. The school is the only girl's high school in that Upazilla. According to the President of the School Managing Committee, the school served a total area of about 315 square kilometres with a total population of about four hundred fifty thousand (among them about two hundred thirty thousand were female).

The physical school environment consisted of three main buildings. These included one three-storey building that included space for administration staff, and 14 classrooms. The computer lab, multimedia classroom, science lab, library room, head teacher office and four classrooms were in the three-storey building. Two tin-sheds were also on site. One shed was used for administrative as well as academic purposes. The second tin-shed had a clay floor and was used for teaching. From an accessibility perspective there were no wheelchair ramps or accessible toilets. Drinking water for the school was obtained from one tube-well within the school grounds. A large playground consisting of a flat grassed and clay area was located in front of the school buildings. No play equipment or use of sports gear was observed during my visit.

School staff

The head teacher Tajul Islam reported having a Masters of Education degree and 17 years teaching experience. He had been in the head teacher position for four years. The assistant head teacher, Kashem, had worked at the school since 1983. Most of the teachers were aged under 30 years and had limited experience in teacher education. All staff were enthusiastic in their discussions with me and reported a strong determination to increase the school's academic results.

Inclusive education practices

To illustrate this school's practices that support inclusion of students with disabilities I will focus this section on my observations of and discussions with and about two students – Nishi and Santi. Nishi is a student with a disability who perceived herself as included but not happy with her learning achievement or progress. Santi is a student with a disability whose attendance at the school ended for a variety of reasons described below. These stories reveal aspects of the teachers' understanding of the value of inclusive education. Moreover, these stories also inform our understanding about the needs and concerns of parents of students with disabilities. The voices of school staff

then highlight how this mainstream school is in the process of changing their practices to better align with the Government policies on educating children with disabilities.

Nishi

The story of Nishi draws together her perceptions and experiences with those of her teachers and parents in order to illustrate a grounded experience of the school's inclusive practices. Nishi was 13 years old and in grade 7. She had a physical disability which influenced her participation in classroom activities such as writing and daily activities such as walking, bathing, and toileting. Nishi was one of eight children identified by the school as having a disability.

During my initial discussion with the head teacher about children with disabilities, he referred to Nishi as an example. He reported that she had a congenital physical disability and the intensity of disability was progressing as she developed, "our concern is concentrated around her mobility that was gradually deteriorating... As I am not a specialist, and there is no support system available in our school, I could advise her parents to visit doctors at best".

I visited Nishi in her class after initial discussions with the head teacher. He accompanied me to her class and introduced me to the students. An immediate observation was the location of Nishi's class. This was on the first floor of the school building. The students' bathrooms were located on the ground floor in a corner of the tin shed. I asked the head teacher about the class location. He responded, "We could understand her problems, but what could we do? We had no option for grade 7 to be on the ground floor". Then he explained that Nishi's classroom had been on the ground floor last year when she was in the grade 6. However, this year, she progressed to the upper class, which took place on the first floor. According to the school policy, only grade 6 classes were situated on the ground floor. The head teacher added "...because of architectural restrictions and the limitation of classrooms, we were bound to shift our classroom for grade 7 and 8 to the first and second floor". He further said that they also had classrooms for the grade 9 and grade 10 science and vocational groups on the ground floor, because these were attached to the particular science laboratories which were located there. The implications of these classroom arrangements are discussed further at the end of this chapter and in further case studies (such as the chapter describing Basanti Model High School).

Nishi's classroom and teacher

Nishi's classroom consisted of six rows of benches and tables. Approximately five students were seated in each row. The head teacher pointed out Nishi to me. I noted she was seated in the middle of the fourth row of benches. Nishi was small in stature compared to her peers. I also imagined the potential difficulty she might have in seeing her teacher's face being seated where she was in a crowded classroom. During my visit the class was focused on *Bangladesh and Global Studies* lessons. This involved the teacher talking about the liberation war of Bangladesh, while students were discussing among themselves. During this observation I noted that Nishi was silent most of the time. Nishi's teacher was not observed providing any one-on-one support for her. After the classroom observations I took the opportunity to question the class teacher, Hasanuzzaman, about the provision of specific support for Nishi. He responded that:

Nishi is too weak to understand the lesson. If we say anything loudly, she will start crying. Due to her disability, she has a few emotional problems. That is why it seemed better to leave her as she is in the classroom, without asking her questions.

We continued to discuss various issues regarding Nishi. The following excerpt from our conversations highlights challenges that students like Nishi might face in participating in class activities:

Hasanuzzaman: We do not pressure her, as we know that she could not maintain concentration for long. On the other hand, it seems she has poor memory. We can understand that all of her challenges are associated with her disability. In fact, *we have very little to offer her except sympathy* (my italics).

Me: How do you take care of her study or progress?

Hasanuzzaman: To tell the truth, I am more focused on the whole class, not to any specific student. Yes, she has some difficulties. Thus, I always try to inspire her.

Me: How does she prepare her classwork?

Hasanuzzaman: She has a group. Her peers are very kind to her. I instructed them to help her in preparing her work.

Hasanuzzaman: Being shorter in size, she cannot reach to write in the middle of the blackboard, and can only touch the lower portion. At the very beginning of my teaching with this class, I brought her to the board to write something. She found writing difficult. As a result, the whole class laughed at her. She felt embarrassed.

This conversation highlighted a number of issues. Hasanuzzaman, like other teachers I interviewed, reported having sympathy for Nishi. On the one hand, this indicates a lack of pedagogical resources available for teachers. This is likely to be at least partly due to teacher training, which is discussed further at the end of this chapter. On the other hand, it also indicates a sense of concern for Nishi's problems. This expression of sympathy, along with other social reactions to disability, is further discussed in Chapter Six. Hasanuzzaman also highlighted his wider focus on the whole class as opposed to the needs of a particular student. This was a common reaction among the teachers I interviewed. For example, Jesmin said, "That means I am responsible for all students not only for children with disabilities". Teachers reported being challenged by large class sizes and the need to supplement their low salaries with after school coaching. This tension between meeting the needs of the majority and attending to individual needs is perceived as an obstacle for inclusive education practices. The employment conditions of teachers are further examined in Chapter Seven.

Implicit throughout the teacher's comments is that disability is perceived in terms of a deficit discourse. The teacher believes that physical disability is a source of challenge in academic activities. Attention to Nishi as an individual would create disadvantage for the majority of students without disabilities. Kindness from her peer group is seen as the best available support strategy. Hasanuzzaman noted that Nishi is often helped by her peers. My field observations revealed that this occurs in many cases and is often an expectation of the part of the school. The quality of peer interaction in Nishi's case is reported in the section that follows.

Quality of peer interaction

I continued my observations of Nishi over the break period for tiffin¹⁶. Most of the students left the class and moved towards the ground floor, but Nishi and three of her peers remained in the classroom. The girls were sharing their tiffin with Nishi as well

¹⁶ 'Tiffin' is popularly used as the acronym for lunch for students in the Bangladeshi schools

as engaging in conversation. One girl left the room and returned a few minutes later with water for Nishi. The interaction between Nishi and her peers was inspiring. The class teacher had also recognised of the value of peer interactions. Literature suggests that supportive peer interaction is a positive sign for this school's moves toward inclusive education, by improving social outcomes of children with disabilities (Brock, Biggs, Carter, Cattey & Raley, 2016). A recent study by Carter et al. (2016) explored how peer-supports enhance the social and learning experiences of students with severe disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Hamilton-Jones and Moore (2013) explored that developing friendships/relationship with peers for each student with a disability is necessary for ensuring 'high-quality inclusive practices' (p.166). In similar fashion, Wiener (2009) put importance on social acceptance of children with disabilities by teachers and peers for inclusion. Moreover, Drame and Kamphoff, (2014) argued that one of the goals of inclusive education is to increase peer acceptance of students with disabilities in the general classroom. In the case of Nishi, peers played a vital role for her at the school. Despite the support from a few peers, the conversation with class teacher and the observation data showed that other peers laughed at her, which created embarrassment for Nishi.

Nishi's peers

In order to further explore the dynamics of Nishi's peer interactions I conducted a group interview with Nishi's close friends from her class. Three of her intimate classmates, Meher, Akhi and Tripti, who had no disabilities participated. Meher related how they came to know Nishi: she reported that Akhi, Tripti and she were friends for a long time from their primary school. After they had completed their primary schooling, they got the chance to enrol in this school in grade 6 through an admission test. Until then Nishi was unknown to them. However, Nishi became their good friend from the first day at this school. Akhi explained that they noticed a weaker girl with a strange physical structure when they arrived at enrolment. Then they became curious about Nishi. They confided that it was an interesting experience for them, and they were in doubt that a girl like Nishi could be educated.

The peers also reported a particular experience involving the head teacher that supported their understanding of Nishi. Akhi was 'making fun' of Nishi, when the head teacher and Nishi's grandfather came into their class. Tripti stated, "I could remember, our head teacher saying that this girl was not like us, but was someone special and

talented. She received a talent pool¹⁷ scholarship based on her primary school examination". Akhi recalled that the head teacher added, "It is not her fault to be like this. So, we should not laugh at her. *We are proud that she is here* (my italics)". After a pause Tripti added that Nishi's grandfather then asked all to cooperate with her, saying, "My granddaughter has some good qualities. Please accept her as your friend, and then she could be like you". Akhi then stated, "I suddenly thought that it could have happened to us. Therefore, I suggested that Meher and Tripti introduce themselves to her. They too became interested". Meher said that when the head teacher asked the students to be a friend of Nishi, "We were happy to raise our hands-up to be her friend". Tripti also reported that they had been friends with Nishi since then. Finally, Akhi reflected on their position and said, "Now, I can understand that there are no differences between us".

This conversation illustrated how a school can provide indirect support for students with disabilities by seeking cooperation from peers. It also shows how a few kind words from the head teacher could be supportive. The head teacher's simple statement, "We are proud she is here", appeared to prompt a change in some students' minds regarding Nishi. They became interested in being her friend. Such practice of motivating students could be an important step in creating inclusive school environments.

Nishi's peers also described the academic challenges they perceived existing for Nishi. "Teachers often can't see her" said Meher. Akhi said that Nishi became frustrated when she could not understand the topic being taught in the class. Tripti added that Nishi often struggled to get the same attention as they did from the teachers, possibly due to her physical appearance. Akhi said that Nishi felt embarrassed when she could not draw the teacher's attention. According to Meher, Nishi was not so interested in some classes due to her difficulty getting the attention of teachers. Tripti suggested that there were two reasons behind such a situation; her physical disability and the teacher's tendency to overlook her.

Nishi's opinion

To further crystallise the data gathered from the head teacher, teachers and Nishi's peers, I talked with Nishi. I visited her house and met her parents to discuss her experience of school. Nishi expressed a positive outlook on her schooling. She stated

¹⁷ Merit

that she was happy with the support she was receiving from some of her peers. However, she had a mixed experience as the following words of hers illustrate: “I like my school because I have some good friends there. Nobody teases me except few naughty girls.” According to Nishi, it was important for her study to get support from her peers. She reported that her peers help her catch up if she misses some issues the teacher is presenting.

Nishi reported facing several contextual challenges that concerned her. These included transportation and physical access. Getting to school took about an hour each way. She reported sometimes waiting several hours to get transport, in addition to the physical state of the rural roads during monsoon season. She also stated that walking for more than five minutes at a time was difficult. Nishi could not climb stairs without support from her peers. She also expressed her frequent tiredness and lack of stamina. So a combination of personal and environmental characteristics presented barriers to Nishi’s school participation.

Nishi also corroborated her peers and reports that she sometimes had difficulty attracting teachers’ attention: “When I raise my hand, often teachers can’t see me. They provide less attention to me and this reduces my desire to participate in activities”. Nishi felt hurt that many of her friends being were brought to the blackboard by teachers, but she was not. According to the Nishi, her inability to write on the middle of the blackboard hindered her participation. It was interesting that no measures had been taken by the school to resolve the problem. Nishi herself suggested the problem could be solved if her teachers allowed her to stand on something when writing on the board. Nishi also reported she did not feel she could suggest this solution to her teachers.

Nishi’s parents’ experiences

Nishi’s parents were happy to share their experiences with me. I met with them at their home after being introduced via the head teacher. It quickly became apparent that they were not confident about Nishi’s prospects due to her disability. They reported that there was nothing they could do about her disability as it was created by God. Nishi’s parents stated they tried to support her by encouraging her not to think with about her physical condition or academic progress. Although Nishi’s examination scores were below average, her mother reported that she was fairly happy with her progress. Her father stated that he tried not to place pressure on Nishi and commented that, “She

studies when she likes to”. “Not much discussion about school takes place at home with her,” said her mother, “We do not want her to be stricken with school issues,” said her father. Limited discussion or consultation with school staff could negatively affect Nishi’s inclusion at school. Gore, Thomas, Jones, Mahoney, Dukes, and Treadway (2016), emphasise that “Through support and involvement, a parent has the potential to lessen their child’s anxiety of social exclusion” (p.157). In addition Nishi’s father stated, “Very rarely do I meet with her school teachers.” Nishi’s mother added that “teachers know better than us”.

Nishi’s parents indicated some hesitancy which I also interpreted as a lack of confidence in Nishi’s school experience. For example, Nishi’s mother stated, “I am not sure what school can do for her.” Contributing to this could be an apparent decline in Nishi’s enthusiasm for school. Her mother reported that she was very interested in attending primary school and that this was evidenced by her achieving a primary merit scholarship. Her father reported they were often asked to discuss Nishi with teachers at the primary school, but in her current school they were not. This disconnectedness between home and school limits the scope for developing a co-operative relationship. A Chinese study reported that a lack of family support is identified by teachers as a major challenge for inclusive education (Xu & Malinen, 2015).

An important issue that emerges here is that Nishi’s parents were reluctant to become involved in her education. Their expectations were not high for Nishi, and they were relatively happy with Nishi’s achievement in the school, although her performance had decreased since primary school. They seemed to have unclear ideas about the responsibilities of the school for their daughter. Similar parental attitudes emerge in the following story of Santi.

Santi

The story of Santi was told by Juthika, a grade 6 class teacher, during the group interview at the school. Santi’s story contrasts with that of Nishi in that Santi no longer attends school. The reasons for her non-attendance are highlighted in her story here. “*If we do not know about the disability that students have* (my italics), how we could we offer special support to them?” asked Juthika. “Even today, I feel pain when I remember that girl”. Santi was a 12 year old girl with a normal physical appearance. She was enrolled in grade 6, but due to her deteriorating academic results in the annual

examinations for two consecutive years, her name was struck off from the school roll. Santi's father had accompanied her to school on her first day and had stated that she had some strange behaviours, difficulty hearing but no disabilities.

Juthika stated that Santi's father was misleading in his disclosure of information about his daughter. However, his withholding of information may have been done out of hope for his daughter. As is discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight (Megawati Adarsha High School) it is not uncommon for parents to have a tendency to hide disability in their children. This may be due to familiarity with the child and the way they are or it might be due to the social pressures to hide disability that exist in Bangladesh. As reported by Anam, Khan, Ahsan, Bari, and Alam (2002), a typical Bangladesh family has great difficulty admitting their daughter has a disability.

In further discussion about Santi, Juthika reported not being familiar with students with disability. She did acknowledge that it was natural for some students to present with behaviour difficulties. During classes Juthika reported that Santi often quarrelled with other students creating problems for Juthika's class management. Other teachers complained that Santi was also passive, and seemed uninterested in class activities. In the mid-year school examination, Santi failed every paper with scores of less than 20%. Juthika acknowledged that despite their concerns about Santi they were not able to accommodate her in the classroom. Juthika reported attempts to talk to Santi's parents about the possibility of Santi having a disability but her parents denied this. Moreover, they became angry with Juthika labelling their daughter as *disabled*. At this point in our conversation, Juthika's sadness was apparent in her facial expressions. According to Juthika, Santi's parents admitted their child might have problems with academic activities but maintained she did not have any disability. It seemed they were afraid that if their child was diagnosed as a disabled, then they might not be able to arrange a future marriage for her. Moreover, society generally might look at them with 'slanting eyes' if their daughter was identified as having a disability.

The school did not appear to have any strategies in place to support Santi. Juthika explained: "I asked myself what the reason was, but I found no answer at that moment. It seemed that our knowledge was very limited and we were not prepared to face such situation". In reply to my query about what the school did for Santi, Juthika described that they did nothing: "If proper intervention could have been offered to her, she could continue her studies". She said that due to her limited understanding Juthika could not

take any steps to support Santi. However, she did discuss the issue with some colleagues. They also had no ideas. Juthika said, “Finding no solutions, I left my hope for her”. Such state of teachers’ hopelessness and confusion are further discussed in the Chapter Eight.

When Juthika reflected back she now thought that Santi may of had a moderate intellectual and hearing disabilities that influenced her learning. Juthika stated that although Santi seemed to be average physically she might have had lower IQ and different behavioural patterns. She also thought that traditional ways of teaching were not appropriate to manage a student like Santi. To compound Santi’s difficulties, several students had bullied Santi and she gradually lost interest in school. Juthika said, “With the growing focus on inclusive education, I can now recognise our mistakes.” However she acknowledged, “It was not only the school’s fault. The parents were more concerned about their honour than their child’s improvement. In fact, they seemed afraid of their daughter being labelled as disabled because of potential loss of status within the community.”

Santi’s story shows how the lack of teacher and parent understanding of students with special educational needs can contribute to the exclusion of students from school. The story also shows the importance of schools being able to engage in honest and purposeful discussion about disabilities and how to support students. It appeared that Juthika was looking for different strategies to support and increase Santi’s participation. In this regard, Xu and Malinen, (2015) argued that receiving different forms of supports, from families, resource teachers, and school leaders, is crucial for teachers to be able to successfully include students with disabilities.

Reflecting on what she had learned from Santi, Juthika stressed the importance of introducing an appropriate identification system “Inclusive education has virtually taken place in our school,” she said. “Still I see a problem with the diagnosis of disabilities. I think that an appropriate diagnosis should be the first step of inclusive education. We need to be aware of our students' disabilities to support and retain them in the school.” The role of diagnosis is further discussed in Chapter Eight.

Idealism and disconnection

The head teacher’s and school management committee’s perspectives on inclusive education contrasted with observations of teachers’ practices. The head teacher and

school management committee highlighted notions of idealism. Whereas teachers' practices suggested that Shibani High School was at a very early stage in its journey towards inclusion of students with disabilities. This section highlights this contrast with evidence from interviews with school staff and observations of teaching practices. The assistant head teacher articulated this contrast in the following statement:

I am aware of inclusive education. Theoretically, our school is an inclusive school, because there are eight children with disabilities studying here. The picture in practice is quite different. In most cases, our school is not complying with the requirements to be inclusive. Due to the provision of the national education policy, we are also marching to achieve the goals of school for all. I am not sure whether it is practical or not.

The challenge of teaching those learners

By sharing the story of Santi, Juthika opened up the discussion in the group interview. Teachers appeared encouraged to share their experiences and challenges. Examples of their comments included Khatun (a grade 7 teacher) reporting his difficulty understanding the speech of some students who had disabilities. Jabbar (grade 8 teacher) added that one of his students had a problem with attention. He had not initially considered this student as having a disability. He said, "It seemed that she did not like my teaching style which meant she was not attentive". He then discussed the problem with his colleagues, but could not agree on any solution. Other colleagues shared similar stories about the same student. Hossain (a science teacher) added that he had a class with her and that he had called upon her parents and asked them about her problem. They reported their child had no associated problems except the academic difficulties. Then Hossain reported that he discussed her case with few teacher educators when he was getting training on inclusive education. They informed him (Hossain) that the child might have a disability. Hossain said, "I came to know from them that students with attention deficit disorder need special attention and intervention to support access in the learning environment". Teachers reported further examples of students with speech, writing, spelling difficulties. Like other teachers in Bangladesh they were increasingly experiencing the challenge of teaching students with special learning needs, while lacking what Florian and Linklater (2010) identify as the "necessary knowledge and skills" (p. 369) and Pijl (2000) called 'essential' to meet 'a typical children's additional educational needs.

Differences of understanding among the teachers of inclusion and disabilities

During the group interview it became apparent that teachers had different opinions about inclusive education. Similar to observations in other schools, there seemed to be a tendency for teachers to jump to conclusions or make assumptions about inclusion. A degree of frustration with teaching in inclusive classrooms was also evident in some teachers' concerns. In contrast, a few teachers seemed positive and happy with inclusive education. I noted in my field journal that individual teacher's backgrounds seemed to influence their attitude and approaches. For example, teachers with no specific training were more likely to express frustration. Two significant and related concerns that arose were the weight of additional responsibilities and the mismatch of teachers' wages with the imposition of responsibilities. These are highlighted by the following quotes from participants:

Jabbar: To me, inclusive education may not be for us. It imposes a paramount responsibility on teachers.

Khatun: We are very poorly paid. Therefore, we are not ready to undertake greater responsibilities.

Alimuzzaman: We are facing enormous challenges, placing extra burdens on us.

The following statement highlighted a more positive approach to students with disabilities:

Jesmin: The presence of a disabled student in my class directed me to change my practice. Now, I have to think differently. I am trying to introduce more participatory approaches. Now I always pay special attention to my disabled students.

In response to a question about how they teach children with disabilities in their classroom and how could they be sure that the students could understand the lessons they taught, teachers offered differing responses:

- Alimuzzaman reported that he conducted the class for all students, not for a student with a disability.
- Jesmin confessed her inability to recognise whether students with disabilities understand the lesson or not.

- Hossain thought that it was quite impossible for him to go to every student in the class and ask them questions.
- Juthika created a shift in approach by saying that the girls seemed not to respond much due to the school location within an area marked by poverty.
- Khatun drew attention to the problems that large class size and background noise posed for students with hearing impairment, as she reported that a student with moderate hearing loss in her class often complained that he could not understand what she was teaching.
- At this point, Alimuzzaman acknowledged their challenges and reported that they were unable to take care of most students individually.

Several teachers suggested that the school's teaching seemed to target only those students who were of above average or average academic ability. Jabbar said, "We are teaching by our ways, but it seems not to be effective for below average students". Hossain contributed, "I agree with Jabbar that only the good students are learning better."

As the conversation progressed, the teachers focused more on their personal experiences and opinions regarding teaching children with disabilities in the school. They explored their limitations, scope of practice, as well as their suggestions for teaching children with disabilities. Examples of teachers' statements during this discussion include:

- "I am not sure why they [children with disabilities] are in our school; they should go to special school."
- "I agree with Jabbar. I think that this is not an appropriate place for them because they should be taught according to their needs. We are not skilled enough to teach them according to their learning needs."
- "I disagree. Children with disabilities have equal rights to be educated in this school like other students of their age."
- "Jesmin is correct. It's our inability to teach them. They have no problem."
- "I am in favour of their education in mainstream schools, but if five to eight children with disabilities enrolled in my class, I am afraid that I might not be able to manage the class."

- “I don’t have training for teaching children with disabilities. And the class size and excessive students in each classroom make it difficult.”
- “I know that different teaching methods are required to teach them. We are not competent enough.”
- “They may create chaos in the classroom. Their presence would be disruptive and make it hard to manage the class.”
- “We all sympathise with them. Therefore, we welcome them. My suggestion is that the parents should be more conscious.”

I noted in my field journal that Jabbar had now moved his focus to place the pedagogical strategies at the centre of the discussion. It was significant that most of the teachers expressed their discomfort in responding to the question about effective classroom teaching methods in terms of inclusive education. The conversation progressed:

Jabbar: In fact, I know very little about teaching and learning strategies.

Alimuzzaman: I don't know what the best methods are, but I apply my personal methods in teaching.

Jesmin: It is the teacher who is responsible for the progress of all students. Therefore, I follow the method that seems supportive to students' achievement.

Hossain: I am frustrated with the disabled girl of my class. It appears that I am unable to satisfy her learning needs through my teaching style.

Alimuzzaman: I am struggling with the large class sizes and coping with the excessive class load. How can I think differently for the children with disabilities?

The uncertain and sometimes mixed responses indicated not only a lack of professional awareness about teaching students with disabilities but also an almost overwhelming sense of inadequacy, as well as reluctance in some cases. These very personal and reflective responses from classroom teachers were in marked contrast to comments from the head teacher.

The perspective of school management

The head teacher and the president of School Management Committee (SMC) stated that Shibani High School had created a pathway for children with disabilities through the implementation of inclusive education in their school. This section is mainly based

on discussion with the current SMC's president (who was elected four years back) followed by the interview with the head teacher and the assistant head teacher.

Head of school managing committee (SMC)

According to the president of the SMC, the school had not been welcoming for children with disabilities for an extended period of time. However, gradual intervention and growing motivation among teachers and parents were supporting an important change along with enhancement of the physical school environment. The president also reported the obligation the school had to provide inclusive education for students with disabilities based on central government policy and emphasised the importance of collaboration between the SMC and school administration in order to better meet the needs of children with disabilities.

During the interview, the SMC president reported that the current head teacher had joined just a month prior to his taking charge of the SMC. The head teacher welcomed him to the school and since then they had an excellent relationship. According to the president of school managing committee, change is not possible without effective collaboration between the SMC and school administration. He further described the school's worn infrastructure when he first arrived at the school. He also reported that only 357 students were enrolled at that time with no students documented as having a disability. He reported that as Shibani High School was the only girl's secondary school situated in the area, it needed to serve the greater community for empowering women. His initial priority was to make the school buildings appropriate as a place of teaching and learning. This involved a lot of physical development work, including repairing old furniture and procuring new furniture, ceiling moulding, and placing at least one fan in every classroom. The school also created annual events and activities to encourage students and their families. These included parent meetings, school open days, cultural functions, annual sports events and *Waj-Mahfil* (religious gathering and Islamic lectures). As a result of their efforts, the quality of education had improved.

The president of the SMC also reported awareness of the government policy of including students with disabilities in school. In regards to inclusion of students with disabilities, he said that they had made provisions to enrol children with disabilities and asked teachers to teach accordingly. At this point, he acknowledged the effort of the head teacher in this matter.

What the head teacher said

The head teacher, Tajul Islam, reported that he favoured inclusive education and that Shibani High School was well on its way to providing inclusive education. Describing the inclusive education practices at the school, Islam further reported that the atmosphere and attitudes of staff were gradually changing. As a result, some children with disabilities were included in the school. He spent time recalling that the entire approach to supporting students with disabilities had changed. He acknowledged that it was very difficult to manage the expectations of parents of students without disabilities regarding ensuring equal rights of children with disabilities. However, he said that the situation was changing as a result of his enthusiastic increasing of awareness. Very recently, he stated that parents of students without disabilities had agreed for the school to educate children with disabilities alongside their children. Tajul noted this as a sign of positive change towards inclusive education. He also identified further obstacles that needed to be removed in order for the school to be more inclusive.

Tajul reported environmental and pedagogical obstacles to inclusive education. The environmental obstacles included transport to and from school for children with disabilities. As some students travelled a long distance, on a typical day they had to wait for hours to get a rickshaw-van. Often, the parents complained about the difficulty for their children travelling on muddy, uneven roads. He stated that the school was not in the position to supplement or provide transport services. He then stated, “We need to improve the physical infrastructure of the classrooms”. He explained that students with visual impairments were not able to use the blackboard; and that due to the absence of ramp access students with physical impairments faced difficulty climbing the stairs to and from class. He then shared a story of a student with physical disability without limbs who used a wheelchair who dropped out of school the previous year. Because of promotion from grade 6 to 7, her classroom was shifted to another school building. The floor of that building was about four feet higher than the ground. Tajul said that they had stairs, but no ramps. Therefore, it became difficult for her to access the classroom. The student’s family lost hope and removed her from the school.

What the head teacher did

During my visit, the head teacher, Tajul Islam, accompanied me most of the time. I asked to observe a grade 7 class where there was a student with a disability, so I asked

Tajul to introduce me to the class teacher during the transition between two periods. Tajul agreed and invited me to follow him. I asked him if I could observe on my own. However, the head teacher said that he would like to learn from me about classroom observation. So we went to the class together. A young teacher was teaching Bangla. Tajul entered the class with me. The students stood up to honour us and greet us according to tradition. Tajul introduced me and I explained why I was there. Then I travelled to the far end of the class and sat on a student bench beside a student. I asked the teacher to continue his lesson. The teacher seemed nervous. Tajul then went to the front of the class and asked the teacher to sit at the back of the class.

I wondered what was happening, but I stayed silent. Tajul then said, “Today, I will conduct the session because my teacher [indicating to me] is here with you. I will teach English”. He just changed the subject from Bangla to English. No doubt, he was an experienced and good teacher. It seemed that he was very popular with the students. He tried to engage students in the lesson, but my presence seemed to make a difference. Most of the time, he had only asked questions to selective students who seemed above average. He followed traditional teaching strategies, and he did not ask any questions to the disabled students. In the final section of this chapter I will further consider the head teacher’s actions in taking over the class.

The practice that I observed

After the class, I asked Tajul if I could observe another class without his presence. He agreed. I went to a class where a girl with visual impairment was present. The teacher was teaching Bangla poetry. I observed that he had not posed any question to the student with visual impairment. He did set up a choral reading activity that the student participated in. The class appeared to follow a textbook with few attempts to engage students. After class, I interviewed him. He described his situation as follows:

Just a few years back, I joined this school. I have not received any training yet, but I try to teach accordingly to the curricular instructions. Due to my lack of knowledge about the teaching strategies for visually impaired students, I avoid her while I teach, because she cannot see when I write anything on the board. But a few of her peers help her to understand.

Concerns of assistant head teacher

During an interview, the assistant head teacher, Kashem, described the school's inclusive education practices by way of a metaphor: that school practices were like assigning untrained drivers to drive heavy vehicles on the motorway. He said:

Just like the possibility of losing many lives on the roads because of the actions of reckless untrained drivers, the future of the children with disabilities could be distorted due to well-intentioned but misguided attempts of untrained teachers in the name of inclusion.

He further argued that

There would be great concern if untrained drivers control vehicles without real licenses. The similar incidence in school education could occur if inexperienced teachers conduct teaching-learning activities in an inclusive setting.

He suggested that the inclusive education practices at the school could be compared with the untrained heavy vehicle driver metaphor as the school was attempting to implement inclusive education without proper professional training of teachers. As a result, there is a possibility of damaging students' futures. Therefore, he argued the need to arrange appropriate training for teachers before implementing inclusive teaching-learning practices in the classrooms. He also stated that the achievement of students was not only dependent on schooling factors, but also on family factors. Then he explained that students spent only a few hours, a fourth of their time in school, with the other three-quarters of their time with family. He stated that in most cases, the parents of children with disabilities were not very aware of the educational needs of their children at home and that families was not providing necessary guidance to the child to prepare their homework or school-related tasks.

Inclusion as opening up education for all

During my visit to the school I was made aware of a number of practices that the school had introduced to increase all students' performance in examinations and to support opportunities for students outside the classroom. This involves a broader notion of inclusion in that it involves inclusion of girls in academic success and taking girls out of their somewhat restricted rural contexts providing opportunities for them to be a part of the wider world. It is not what the current government mandate means by inclusion which is concerned with disability, but it is part of the spirit of inclusion. This section

presents examples of school practices that were introduced to uplift student performance in examinations and to create greater opportunities outside the classroom.

Social inclusion through a school study tour

A study tour for students is not a new phenomenon; it is part of general academic culture in many schools, but, as stated by the SMC president, the case was entirely different in this school. The SMC president related how in the early days of his involvement with this school, he found that a very small percentage of girls had been outside of their Upazilla. Therefore, he planned to introduce a study tour to expand students' views about life. He stated: "Though, a study tour provides learning opportunities for students to extend their understanding, it was challenging for me to market the study tour as an educational event for the school". He reported that the task was difficult because of the high level of poverty among families of students and their sense of conservativeness that often confined females to home-based roles. Families were mostly religious, and general modesty was expected from women, with most wearing a burkha¹⁸, especially when they go outside. Similarly, the village matabbars¹⁹ showed a resistance to the school arranging a study tour for girls. The SMC president stated: "Honestly, it was challenging for us. We had to answer many queries from the matabbars and parents". He described how the study tour became a significant school event and how the school organised study tours regularly for students to provide experiences about their extended culture and heritage. He noted that students enjoyed the tours, as they created scope to travel outside of their locality. He reported his realisation that the tours were an opportunity to widening students' vision and general attitude to life.

Various authors note that study tours provide students with an opportunity to increase knowledge and gain different educational experiences through interacting with cultures, environments and peoples beyond their locality (Long, Akande, Purdy, & Nakano, 2010; Shin Yu, Harris, & Sumner, 2006). Such education trips could provide an opportunity for students to experience an unfamiliar environment and scope for cross-cultural experiential learning that may increase students' knowledge, skills and maturity (Shin Yu, 2006).

¹⁸ a veil which is worn for religious-cultural reasons to cover body and head

¹⁹ village leaders

The SMC president also reported the study tours provided opportunities for students with disabilities who were often ignored in the community. He stated that children with disabilities participated in all study tours and supported this with an example from the last year's study tour during which he observed students with disabilities enjoying the time with their peers. Their disability was not an obstacle to them taking part in this extra-curricular activity. He further reported that he had requested special support to ensure their participation in the tour. The SMC president said, "From my point of view, such events are effective in reducing the gaps between students and developing confidence in children with disabilities".

Provision of academic coaching

Provision of coaching was introduced as an initiative to raise all students' examination performance. The two important public examinations to assess secondary students' performance are the JSC (end of grade 8) and SSC (end of grade 10). The quality of a school in Bangladesh is popularly judged by the students' results in these two examinations. The SMC president reported the school initiated a coaching programme for students in grade 8 and 10 to ensure examination success. He stated that the school covered the expenses for this and since the introduction of this support student performance has risen sharply. A combination of reasons was given for the provision of this support. These included: previous poor performance of the school in these examinations, the difficulty teachers had in providing support for students during regular classes, as well as parent demands. The head teacher added that due to poverty, most of the parents were not able to afford private coaching. The head teacher explained the coaching involved close supervision and support by teachers. During coaching students were instructed to memorise answers and taught specifically about the examination. Sessions included the presentation of mock tests to simulate examination experience. This coaching was also available to students with disabilities.

Describing the usefulness of the coaching programme, a student with a disability, Rabeya, who was in grade 9, reported: "Last year, I was a JSC²⁰ examinee. The free coaching created an opportunity for me to be prepared. In the classroom, I missed many things that were taught due to my disability. The coaching created an opportunity for

²⁰ JSC means Junior School Certificate, a public examination is taken after grade 8 by the education boards in Bangladesh

me to remedy this”. Specific remedial instruction can support the academic performance of children with specific learning disabilities (Ljusberg, 2011). Although the school had no provision of structured remedial instruction, such free extra tutoring offers a special opportunity of getting remedial instruction for all students including students with disabilities. In spite of the goals of the free coaching and extra tutoring, many students appeared to benefit from it. Students like Rabeya perceived it as an additional opportunity to reduce the gap in learning she experienced in the formal classroom lessons. Many researchers have reported that remedial class for those students with learning difficulties could improve their level of learning so that they could fit more into regular classrooms (Dekker, Ziermans, & Swaab, 2016; Ljusberg, 2011; Obidoa, Eskay, & Onwubolu, 2013). A study conducted in Kenya showed that remedial instruction fostered progression of marginalised students in primary schools (Oonge, 2013).

Celebrating students’ achievement

The SMC president described a reception ceremony for students who achieved excellent grades in public examinations. He reported that this formal recognition supported students’ attitudes towards studying for the examinations. The functions were arranged in a manner that brought a festive mood and glory to the students and the school. Besides all the students and teachers, the parents and some local identities also attended the celebrations. The head teacher added that the programmes also had some implications for parents, because it helped to highlight a level of parental awareness and involvement that was essential for their children’s success.

During my interview with Nishi, she referred specifically to these ceremonies. She said, “I have to obtain GPA²¹-5 in my upcoming JSC exam, because I would like to be honoured like them. After listening to my seniors [who achieved GPA-5], I am now encouraged to study more and more.” A similar initiative was observed at another school and is discussed in Chapter Nine.

Based on the testimony of the president of the SMC and the head teacher, it appears that the initiatives described above have supported intrinsic motivation of students and also serve as an incentive for children with disabilities to reset their views about study.

²¹ Grade point average (GPA) is used to measure for academic achievement in school utilised a five-point grade scale. The academic performance for an individual subject is reported through a 'Letter Grade System'.

The school records reflected this observation. The head teacher said that before these initiatives, only two to three students were achieving a GPA-5 in the public examination. In contrast, an average of 25 to 30 students was achieving GPA-5 in the SSC for last three years and the number was higher for JSC. The SMC president said, “It was not so easy for us to uplift the school results in the examination. Now the pass rate is about 100%. The extra efforts are the secret of such success”. The head teacher agreed: “This achievement is not only mine or the teachers’, but due to the efforts of SMC and parents. Together we have changed the performance pattern of the school.” The SMC President also stated: “Nowadays, we are proud that our school has become one of the best schools not only in this Upazilla but also within the district”.

During my field visit, I found persuasive evidence that there was an overall improvement in students’ examination success and in the school’s facilitation of engagement of girls in education and personal development. What invites further exploration is the extent to which these improvements were experienced by students with disabilities. This is discussed further in Chapter Nine. The following section reflects on the emergent themes from the data gathered during my visit. This includes what participants reported as important support from outside the school to enable them to be effective teachers of students with disabilities.

Further discussion of emergent themes

This chapter started with stories of two different students and commentary from their teachers and school administrators. These narratives highlighted some complex themes that I will discuss further in this section. In addition, the case of the school as a whole reveals a level of disagreement between the teachers and the head teacher, which suggests a level of idealism around inclusive education and a disconnection that exists within the school’s classrooms.

The head teacher reported enthusiastically how his school was complying with the government’s policy on inclusive education. Ironically, the assistant head teacher disagreed, and described a metaphor that saw the teachers as incompetent drivers of inclusive education. The teachers themselves considered that they are not yet ready to embrace children with disabilities in their classroom, as they were not trained. Several teachers perceived inclusion as a problematic phenomenon, as they acknowledged that they had a minimal understanding of inclusive education policies and provisions made

by legislation. Teachers' understanding of the policy of inclusive education is vital for implementation, as Ntombela (2011) reported in a South African context showing that restricted experiences of inclusive education and limited understandings of what it entails contributed to teachers feeling inadequately prepared to implement inclusive education consistent with government policy.

Four constantly overarching themes emerged that are linked to the overriding theme 'idealism and disconnection'. These are:

- the conceptualisation of inclusion as education for all;
- teachers' lack of knowledge and consequent confusion;
- a gap between aspiration and practice; and,
- the complexity of parental engagement.

Inclusion as 'education for all'

In the practice reported by the head teacher and the president of the SMC inclusion was described in terms of the school moving to achieve the goal of a 'school for all' (UNESCO, 1994). In this sense, inclusive education could be considered as compliance with the national goal of education, "to create unhindered and equal opportunities of education for all" (MoE, 2010, Goal no. 8). The school's efforts were significantly engaged with the country's goals to ensure education for all types of students. The school was working hard to engage students with school and supporting them to pass exams and also working more broadly to develop their human potential. School study tours and tutoring support were indicative of the aim of empowering women, and thus provided a form of gender inclusion in education. However, the school had numerous constraints in complying with the requirements to be inclusive for children with disabilities, in particular with the national education goal (no. 24) that focuses on the education of physically and mentally-challenged students (MoE, 2010).

Limited understanding and confusion in teachers

Teachers' practices are likely to be dependent on how well they understand the concept of inclusive education (Sanagi, 2016). The teachers' comments demonstrated a level of confusion about how to support children with disabilities in the classroom. It appeared that, as a group, the teachers were not against the concept of inclusive education, but rather confused about what it involves and what they needed to do in order to teach

students with disabilities. This lack of knowledge was expressed through a discourse of uncertainty.

Some teachers stated that inclusive education was not suitable for the school. They expressed frustration with teaching in classrooms which included students with disabilities, by explaining they informed that they know neither about disability, nor how children with disabilities should be taught. In some instances they considered children with disabilities disrupted their teaching. Although recent government policies expect teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms (RPPDA, 2013), teachers in this school were not confident about dealing children with disabilities. Ntombela (2011) explains that any change in the education policy can draw out mixed feelings among teachers expected to implement the change. These feelings might include excitement about the changes, uncertainty and stress. In the case of Nishi, the head teacher commented that he was not sure what should be done for her because he was not a specialist. Several teachers also echoed this view. They were not trained and were thus uncertain how to address the needs of students with disabilities in their classroom.

The case further indicated that teachers' uncertainty about effective strategies for engaging all students in the lesson was affecting the education of the children with disabilities. Their teachers' limited understanding of disabilities and inclusive pedagogies compounded their existing challenges. Helsing (2007) argues that recognition of dilemmas such as that of the teacher uncertainty can be utilised for development in teaching.

Lack of parental engagement

Parents need to play a central role in inclusion of students with disability in schools. Recent work by Gore, et.al. (2016) explored how enhanced family support and school connectedness could accelerate the school success for secondary students and also could promote inclusion. This case highlights not the only unwillingness of some parents to discuss their children's disability but also a lack of process for liaison between parents and school. A significant question remains how go about approaching and discussing with parents about their child's disability in order to better connect them with the school.

Although the head teacher found ways of engaging parents generally, the engagement of parents of children with disabilities was more difficult. For example, Nishi's story

showed that her parents had never been consulted by the school regarding her education. Collier, Keefe and Hirrel (2015) argue that the school-family relationship is critical for positive teaching practices for teachers. Thus the limited participation of parents in the educational decisions making regarding their children with disabilities in this school has potentially contributed to the teachers' reluctance to teaching these students. A further discussion on complexities of parental engagement is presented in Chapter Eight.

Alignment and gap between aspiration and practice

The overarching theme identified in this case is a mismatch between the idealistic representations portrayed by school administrators and the grounded realities reported by classroom teachers. As the school attempted to embrace inclusive education, 'teaching for all' or 'teaching for specific children with disabilities' became a primary source of teachers' concern. Factors such as the large class sizes, exam-oriented teaching, and limited teaching time contributed to complexities involved in providing education for children with disabilities. However, it is important for teachers to recognise the complex nature of teaching in order to further develop their practices (Helsing, 2007).

A further example of the gap between aspiration and practice is the school's pursuit of higher examination grades. Although it can be argued that the school is preparing students for their future life by supporting higher achievement, this approach could increase tensions for teachers trying to include and support students with disabilities. An increased emphasis on exam results may result in students with disabilities experiencing further limitations of resources and uneven competition which may push them to the periphery (Forlin, 1997; Konza, 2008). The direction that the managing committee and school administration are taking the school is important. Both the president of the SMC and the Head Teacher were confident that the school could cater for children with disabilities, but resource constraint is affecting their movement forward. For example, a child with physical disabilities (without limbs) dropped out of school due to the barriers in the physical environment. However, positive relationship between children with disabilities and their peers are encouraging for fostering inclusive education, as a recent study explored that classmates' attitudes, intentions and behaviours towards their peers with disabilities are necessary to facilitate their learning

and also for their mutual co-existence and development (Bebetsos, Derri, Zafeiriadis, & Kyrgiridis, 2013).

Conclusion

The case of Shibani High School described above provides an in-depth story of the successes and challenges involved in inclusive education in Bangladesh. The case highlighted the disconnection between government policies and the school administrators tasked with implementing these policies and the complexities of the daily experiences and practices of classroom teachers. The school's head teacher was more conscious of government policies whereas the teachers were not. Teachers struggled with the challenges presented by students with disabilities who exhibited characteristics that were unfamiliar to them creating uncertainty and confusion in their teaching practices that manifested in 'ignoring' or 'avoiding'. To move forward on the road to inclusive education at Shibani High School teachers indicated a need for more support for their teaching – both in terms of training and resources. The school had appealed to the government to allocate more resources to help change their infrastructure. An active family-school-community collaboration (Collier, Keefe & Hirrel, 2015) may resolve some of the tensions within the school's practices. However, the school is not entirely prepared to embrace inclusive education for children with disabilities in agreement with government policy statements.

Chapter Six

Beloved Community, Indigenous Values and Inclusion with Limited Resources

My personal beliefs drive me to teach children with disabilities. If I empathise with the disadvantaged, then the benevolent spirits will protect me from the effect of any malevolent spirits who cause diseases and destroy crops - Akhil (a teacher with an ethnic belief)

Introduction

Inclusive education is primarily an ideology described in Western literature and promulgated through western academic and governmental organisations (Sharma, Loreman & Macanawai, 2016). In reading the inclusive education literature it is possible to be left with the impression that few schools, particularly in developing countries such as Bangladesh actually practice inclusive education (Hill & Rahaman, 2013). However, as described in this chapter, there are schools in Bangladesh that provide education for students with disabilities and are relatively progressive on their inclusive education journey. This case study describes the education context of Basanti Model High School, located in a remote ethnic village. The experiences of students with disabilities and teachers at the school illustrate the influences of social and traditional beliefs on the schools support for students with disabilities. The inclusive education practices that take place at this school present examples of how society and educators can make a difference, and support our understanding of creating a safe and inclusive school community (Hillis & Woolworth, 2008; Marsh, 2005; Smith & Smith, 2000). These practices align with the Martin Luther King, Jr's concept of *beloved community* which is marked by relationships of mutuality, of recognizing others as they desire to be seen (Conkling, 2015). From the perspectives of a *beloved community*, the Basanti Model High School appeared to nourish the well-being and learning of students with and without disabilities.

The case begins with a general description of the school followed by accounts of two students with disabilities. One student has a hearing impairment and the other has physically disabilities and comes from a family who experiences extreme poverty. Throughout these stories the role of teachers, parents and peers in supporting students'

inclusion are highlighted. A case description of a teacher at the school highlights how he utilised different strategies, focused on students' emotional and intellectual needs in order to provide an inclusive classroom. The findings from discussions with a group of teachers, the head teacher and managing committee are also presented. The introduction of a modified assessment system to support students with disabilities highlights the school's journey towards inclusive education despite their very limited resources.

Method

Access to the school

I entered the school with the help of a gatekeeper who was a development activist working with the goal of establishing the rights of ethnic minority groups in that region. My relationship with the gatekeeper extended back several years as I had worked as an advisor on a number of projects for his organisation.

Informants

A variety of discussions and informants provided the data that this chapter describes. These included discussions with school administrators, teaching staff, students and parents of students. The school administrators interviewed were the head teacher, Ramshing Chakma, who had been serving the school since its establishment, the chairman of the school managing committee (SMC), Sree Sham Chakma, who was also an elected local government representative, and the assistant head teacher, Pulkhet. Eight assistant teachers (four female and four male) participated in a group interview. These were Mongkui (male of Marma ethnicity), Sunil (male of Chakma ethnicity), Akhil (male of Chakma ethnicity), Sumon (a Muslim male from a local Bengali settler community), Aninta (female of Chakama ethnicity), Sulekha Roy (female of Hindu Bengali ethnicity), Sashimala (female from a Tanchangya ethnicity), and Rangamilla (a female teacher from Tripura ethnicity). Two students with disabilities were also interviewed, i) a grade 9 boy Nickel Chakma (who had a hearing impairment); and ii) Rayma a female grade 7 student who had a physical disability. I also visited Nickel's family and discussed with his sister and father to gain insight to Nickel's school experiences. During my visit, I also participated in two classroom observations and examined the school's records and facilities.

The school and community context

Established in 1984, Basanti Model High School is a private but community driven school, located in a remote Upazilla in Bangladesh's Hill Tracts region. These areas are known for hilly landscapes and for diverse ethnic minority populations each with their unique cultural heritage. This region is geographically different from the mainland of Bangladesh and famous for its waterfalls, Kaptai Lake and the Karnafuli River. People are dependent on the waterways for travelling to the district headquarters or outside of their Upazilla. The school is a co-education facility with 815 students (402 girls and 413 boys) at the time of my visit. A majority (approximately 65%) of students are from four ethnic minority groups (Chakma, Marma, Tripura and Tangchainga) who have distinctive languages, traditions and customs. Each of these groups also has their own dress, script, and belief system. Nine students were noted by the head teacher as having a disability. These included physical (such as, difficulty walking) and sensory disabilities (such as, hearing impairment). The school had 17 teachers. Thirteen were funded under the government's monthly pay order (MPO) programme, receiving their salaries directly from the Exchequer. Four teachers received their salary from school funds not under the MPO. A majority of teachers had at least a bachelor's degree in education.

The school is situated in a quiet natural environment surrounded by hills. The school has two academic buildings and one administrative block (see Figure 12). The school also includes a modern two-storey hostel for students to board in while attending school. This is provided as the school's large enrolment area sees many students travel long distances along the river system to school.

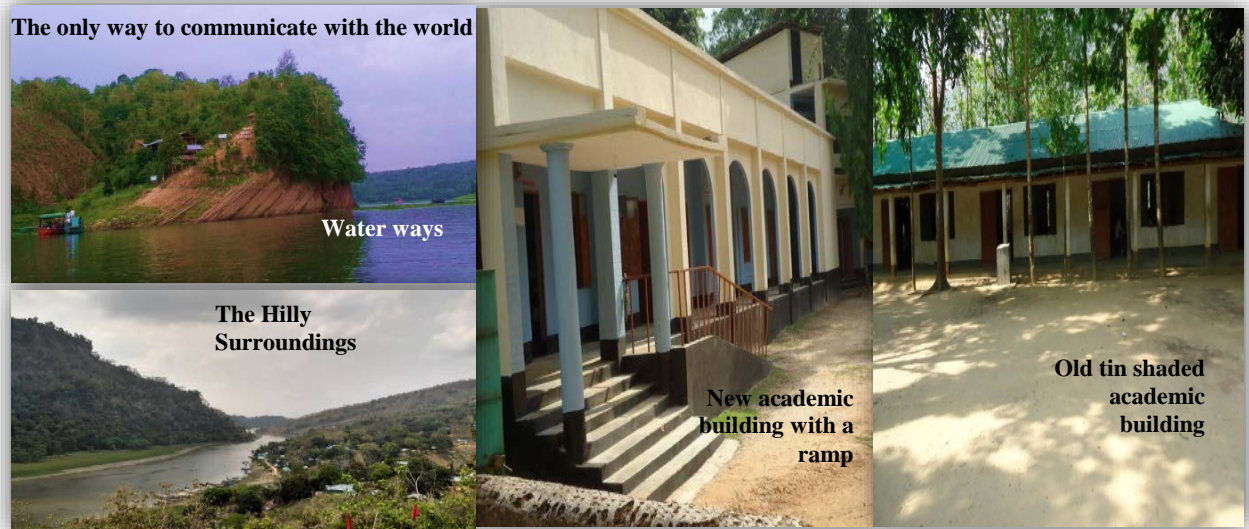


Figure 12. Basanti Model High School and its surrounding context.

The local people have a deep relationship with the hills and forests, as a forest reserve covers most of the Upazilla. “*Jhum Chash*²²” is the principal occupation for most of the local families. The literacy rate among adults in the community is low compared to the other Upazillas in Bangladesh. One of the main reasons for the low levels of educational development is the decades-long tensions between the ethnic groups and the government. However, the peace accord signed between the ethnic rebels and the government in 1997 created an opportunity for education facilities to flourish in this area. According to the head teacher, Ramshing Chakma, “This accord brought the opportunity for a significant number of children to be educated. The enrolment trend for our school has been moving upwards since then.”

The surrounding communities are centred around traditional family units known as a *para*²³. The para consists of a number of households from a particular ethnicity. In the traditional system, para is the smallest social unit, and the head of a para is designated as *Karbary* who is tasked with making decisions on behalf of his fellow villagers. A focus of this school was the establishment of strong relationships with Karbaries in

²² ‘Chash’ is a Bangla word means cultivation. Jhum, a traditional indigenous farming system in the Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, is a special slash-and-burn type of agriculture, also called shifting cultivation, or swidden cultivation that involves the cutting and burning of plants in a hilly forest to create a field, and then planted various seeds together. Historically, Jhum cultivation has become a part and parcel of ethnic culture in Hill Districts of Bangladesh, and the ethnic local inhabitants is sometimes called ‘Jhumma’. [See Chakma and Ando, 2008 for more details].

²³ A traditional small ethnic village is called para.

order to increase attendance rates and awareness of the education available for children. Sree Sham Chakma, the president of SMC, confirmed the para-centric nature of the school community and also the parallel pluralistic administrative and judicial system. The head teacher reported that the school aspired to continue development of its facilities and support for students. The school received funding from local and regional councils with very little central government support. However, teachers and members of the SMC reported receiving training on inclusive education through a central government-funded project.

The history of the school's establishment was reported by the president of the SMC. Sree Sham Chakma, who was also an elected Chairman of the local Union Parishad, reported the school was a symbol of collective community efforts. There had been a longstanding need for the school as there were few secondary schools in the region, with many children deprived of high school education opportunities. Through the leadership of a local public representative (elected chairman of the Upazilla Parishad) Babu K Chakma, the community rallied behind the proposal. For example, one of the local Headmen [a traditional head of a Mouza which consists of a number of Paras, and appointed by the Circle-Chief (traditionally known as King) Late Bijoy Chakma (pseudonym) donated two acres of land for the school site. At the same time, his wife Chitra Chakma donated a significant amount of money to start the school. Four years after its inception, it was enlisted under the MPO coverage as a Junior Secondary school in 1988. In the same year, the school received permission from the education board to open grade 9. In the following year, the school obtained approval to enrol students in grade 10. In 1990, students first participated in SSC examinations.

An inspection of the school records indicated that students' examination performance was consistent and considered satisfactory. SSC examination pass rates over the previous four years were 85.38% (2013), 84.68% (2014), 89.09% (2015), and 99.1% (2016). In 2016, 116 out of 117 students passed successfully. In the JSC (public examination) the school result was satisfactory with a total of 144 students who appeared, and 143 who passed successfully, with 14 students achieving GPA-5. The head teacher indicated a desire to lift examination results further to ensure more students would achieve GPA-5.

Nickel: A student with hearing impairment

The following section focuses on Nickel, a 15-year-old, grade 9 student who overcame his disability to achieve academic success. Nickel had a progressive hearing impairment and did not benefit from amplification support. Nickel's story also demonstrates how an intrinsically motivated student can influence a wider school community. The data for this story was gathered from classroom observations, discussions with class teachers Akhil and Mongkui, the head teacher as well as discussions with Nickel's father and sister.

Discussion with Nickel's family

According to his father, Nickel could speak well when he was young. He then began to lose his hearing when he was ill which was around the time he started primary school. Nickel is now thought to have a profound hearing loss. When Nickel's hearing difficulty was first identified his family consulted with a traditional healer, a village doctor and medical professionals in Chittagong and Dhaka. Some suggested Nickel receives a cochlear implant. However this was financially out of reach for the family. Nickel's father expressed sadness at Nickel's loss of hearing. He reported that over a period of several years, his hearing has deteriorated and he was now unable to understand speech, except by reading people's lips and facial expressions. Nickel was able to read so he could answer questions that were written down. He also used forms of natural sign language.

Nickel's sister reported that he often expressed his sorrow and questioned why he had lost his hearing. She also reported that some peers had teased Nickel, and that he always prayed to the Buddha for the return of his hearing. He sometimes uttered with a great sorrowfulness: "If I could hear and listen to my teachers in the classroom, I could do much better in my study".

Nickel's academic achievement was confirmed by his father who commented on his pride in having a son who achieved the highest marks in his year group on the school examination. He was awarded a merit scholarship at the fourth-grade scholarship examination introduced by the Hill District Council and a general scholarship based on his merit position in the Junior School Certificate Examination (JSC) result. Although Nickel has been a very enthusiastic and motivated student, his hearing condition was deteriorating and his father expressed concern about Nickel's future. He did

acknowledge the support from the school, “Teachers are friendly and sympathetic to my son. They care for him.”

Factors contributing to Nickel’s success

During my visit to the school, I interviewed Nickel to gain insight into his academic success. He reported that although he was aware of his limitations, he tried hard to concentrate on his studies. He also acknowledged the continual support he was receiving from the school and teachers. For examples, he reported that one of his teachers, who was living next to his house, agreed to help him with his studies outside regular school hours. That particular teacher (Akhil) stated during an interview, that he was convinced of Nickel’s strength of mind and that he was keen to support Nickel’s studies.

Nickel also identified his inner determination to succeed, “if I try, I may be able to overcome the odds and still can progress in my study - I have to”. Although Nickel stated he was facing difficulties in his school experience, he was satisfied with the support received from teachers. Consistent with Nishi’s story as described in the previous chapter, teachers’ compassionate approach to children with disabilities appears to support the presence, participation and achievement of students with disabilities.

I asked Nickel how he coped in the classroom. He responded, “Besides the support from my neighbouring teacher, I discuss class topics with others in my class”. Nickel’s descriptions of the factors supporting his achievements were confirmed by the statements from his class teachers. One teacher, Mongkui, reported that Nickel’s strong determination, interest in subjects along with his persistent effort supported his academic success. Another teacher, Akhil stated, “Despite his hearing problems, he can still achieve like the others. He always tries to understand class lessons by observing the teacher’s writing on the board and also by observing teachers”. Noting Nickel’s determination, the head teacher said, “Nickel was not willing to retreat. He wants to be a well-educated person and he dreams about a golden future.” Nickel’s strong determination clearly indicates that despite his sensory challenges, he wants to continue studying.

Challenges at school

Despite Nickel's determination, it appeared that his disability created several challenges for his education. For example, several teachers reported a gradual deterioration of his interest in studies. Mongkui interpreted that Nickel's difficulty in listening to teachers was affecting his attention in the class. This was backed up by another teacher, Sumon, who said, "I noticed that he has become more inattentive. He could hear a little before, but now seems to hear nothing...his tendency to speak has significantly decreased. Now he uses limited words." Nickel also acknowledged his classroom challenges when he said, "Because of large class sizes and the background noise in the classroom, it is difficult for me to understand the lesson properly".

Strategies to support Nickel

I was interested to better understand what, if any, specific strategies the school had put in place to support Nickel. I asked the head teacher. "He described a workshop with teachers who taught Nickel's classes. During the workshop they discussed various issues related to Nickel's teaching and learning. He also mentioned that teachers were now more aware of how to support a student with hearing loss. For example, he reported that teachers now knew to maintain eye contact with Nickel during lessons. Teachers I interviewed, also corroborated the head teacher's statements by reporting changes in their practice after having considered Nickel's needs. A significant reported change was their attitude towards teaching all students. Mongkui said, "We could now understand how to meet the needs of students like Nickel in the classroom."

Observation data supported teachers' statements about the changes in their class practices. I observed a class where Nickel was present. He was seated on the first bench, from where he could clearly see the teacher's face. The teacher provided his lecture at a relatively slow pace using a clear voice. The teacher made a frequent eye contact with Nickel and also repeated some concepts several times. It appeared to me that the teacher was very mindful and supportive of Nickel. The teacher also used various visual aids in the class, with frequent use of the blackboard. On several occasions he asked Nickel questions and Nickel wrote his response on the board instead of answering orally.

Teachers' perspectives

During the teacher group interview, most of them used Nickel as an example of success. According to Rangamilla, Nickel was “a born genius”. He expressed his feelings of guilt for not being competent enough to support Nickel, “As I am not an expert in sign language, I often fail to convey my ideas to him.” Sumon added, “I have sympathy for him but what can I offer him for support? I have to take care of another 64 students in the class.” At this point in the discussion, Akhil provided some insight into the school's inclusiveness, “We can take care of children who have mild to moderate level of disabilities, but Nickel's disability is becoming severe”. Rangamilla added that they regularly discussed how they could continue to support Nickel as his hearing loss continued. During our discussion Mongkui presented a newspaper article that featured Nickel. He stated that he felt proud when he found a headline about Nickel in the daily newspaper. The headline read: *A ninth-grade student continues to study: Nickel Chakma is still struggling with hearing problems.*

Rayma: An ethnic girl with a disability

An assistant teacher, Sashimala, was describing the effect of poverty on the school attendance by children, “Due to illiteracy and poverty, some parents withdraw their children from school. Due to the poverty, many students get involved with the loom to earn a living instead of studying”. Sashimala continued to describe the effect of poverty on the inclusion of children by telling the story of Rayma. She was studying in grade 7 and had physical impairments that influenced her mobility.

Sashimala had noticed that Rayma was absent for a couple of weeks at the beginning of the last academic year. She asked other students why Rayma was missing the school. Some classmates informed her that Rayma was eager to attend school, but her father was not supportive of her schooling. Sashimala discussed this with colleagues who reported considerable poverty experienced by Rayma's family and their inability to afford the costs associated with Rayma's schooling. Sashimala reported that she then tried to find an effective strategy to weave her way into school. She visited Rayma's house, met her father and asked him why they were not sending Rayma to school. At this point, Sashimala stated with clarity that Rayma's father queried Sashimala with “What would be the use of education for a child, like Rayma?” Rayma's father further reminded Sashimala about their tribal tradition, which looked for contribution to

household functions from every member of the family. Rayma's father told Shahimala that as his daughter was disabled, he could not justify the expense of Rayma's education. He reported a recurrent cost of 850 TK²⁴ added in the new academic year to cover the cost of uniforms, books and other supplies. Sashimala reported returning from her visit with feelings of disappointment. However she remained motivated to support Rayma's attendance at school.

Sashimala presented Rayma's case to the head teacher, highlighting their responsibilities to retain students wherever possible. The head teacher agreed with Sashimala's arguments and arranged a full tuition fee waiver, and arranged for the school to bear the costs of her uniform and education materials. Sashimala stated, "I am proud that my school cares for children with disabilities. As a result of the school's support, Rayma came back to school". Listening to Sashimala's account, I became interested in meeting Rayma.

I visited Rayma's class and had a brief discussion with her. She reported that her disabilities were not a burden and that she viewed education as the key to her future. Rayma expressed her hope to progress like her other non-disabled peers and also her appreciation of teachers. "Teachers here care for me. They gave me a second chance by arranging the entire cost of my uniform and other costs. I am pleased they convinced my father about the importance of my study." She further expressed that, "Working on the loom is so hard. I want to study because I don't want to be as my mother is. I would like to have a good job."

The head teacher presented the case of Rayma as an example of his school's inclusive practices, "My school is always positive to provide the best support for children with disabilities. Every time I look at Rayma, I feel happy that she is in my school." Regarding the school's culture of supporting disadvantaged students, the head teacher further reported with a wry smile that they lent their hands when disabled students looked for support. He termed it as a tradition of the school.

A teacher's use of innovative practices to build students' confidence

This section reports how a teacher purposively changed his practices to accommodate students' learning needs. This account is based on my classroom observations and

²⁴ TK means taka, the Bangladesh currency; approximately the exchange rate of Taka to the US dollar is 80TK = 1 USD.

subsequent interview with Mongkui, an assistant teacher, from a tribal community. My observation took place when Mongkui was teaching a newly introduced subject called 'Bangladesh and Global Studies'. Out of 81 students enrolled in the class, 72 were present. There were two students with disabilities in the class. Ashita, a girl with physical disabilities who was from a tribal family and boy, Debu, who had visual impairment and was from a settler Bengali family. The teacher was experienced and had attended many staff training sessions. The focus of the lesson was 'social issues'. I entered the class during the transition from the second to third period. I noticed students were talking, laughing and having fun. After a few minutes, Mongkui entered the room. He exchanged greetings with students and tried to introduce me to the students. However, students informed him I had already introduced myself to the students when I first entered the room.

Soon after arriving in the class, Mongkui noticed that both students with disabilities were sitting near the back of the room. He proceeded to bring Ashita and Debu to the first bench close to his location. Later, Mongkui explained that a priority for disabled students should be seating them near teachers so that they could better listen to the lesson. A second priority was to engage them in the learning tasks. According to Mongkui, if a teacher can perform these tasks, he will be successful in teaching without any wastage of time. He also reported that his practice was based on care and love.

Mongkui began the session by reviewing information from the previous session. He did this by randomly directing questions to four students. Questions were directed to Ashita and Debu. Ashita correctly answered the question and Mongkui praised her. On the other hand, Debu appeared reluctant to answer. Mongkui responded, "No problem, let's see who can answer it". Another student took the opportunity and responded to the question. Then Mongkui returned his focus to Debu and asked him, "Did you hear the answer? Can you repeat it?". Then Debu answered correctly. Mongkui praised Debu's response. Later in the interview, Mongkui explained his strategies and reported that through a little effort a teacher can make a class inclusive for all.

Mongkui further explained his strategy of focusing on students' emotional and intellectual levels. He stated that he respected the efforts of the students, because individual students have a sense of prestige. He had acknowledged this by responding positively and using words of encouragement and praise. According to Mongkui, it was natural that students made mistakes. As a teacher, his duty was to respond without surprise and offer students a chance to correct or learn from their mistakes. He reported

that a typical class involved him asking questions or presenting a written task. When a student provided an incorrect response, he would pose the question to the wider class instead of providing the correct answer. Throughout the lesson it was apparent that Mongkui was passionate and innovative in his approaches.

The observation data revealed that Mongkui was teaching a lesson titled *festivals and fairs* under chapter three of the text *the cultural diversity of Bangladesh*. After writing the lesson title on the board he asked students to close their eyes and to imagine a festival where they were in the past year, and to think about what they did and what the festival looked like. After a minute he asked students to open their eyes. Then Mongkui facilitated a discussion among students about what they had imagined. At first, he asked Ashita about what she could see. Ashita reported about the *Biju* Festival that she enjoyed last year. Then he asked another Chakma Student about the rituals of the festival. That Chakma student said, "We do not kill any animal or any living creatures during this festival. My grandma and mum cooked *Pachan* (a mixed curry with five types of vegetables). We enjoyed it a lot". Suddenly, one Marma student said, "Sir, we celebrated Shangrai instead. My friend (pointing to a Tripura student) celebrated the *Baisuk* festival. All are fun." Then Mongkui turned his attention to Debu and asked him about the festival he imagined. Debu replied that being a Bengali, he also enjoyed the *Biju* festival. His friends had invited him to their house on this occasion. He visited his friends who were tribal, and he also went to the fair to buy toys. After further discussion about festivals Mongkui asked students to think about a list of festivals and invited a student to take the chalk and write down festivals on the board. Then Mongkui asked the combined class what else could be included into this list. Students came with different names of festivals. Then Mongkui summing up and said, "Because of our cultural rich tradition we have many festivals...we have religious festivals, social festivals and cultural festivals. We have festivals like *Pohela Boishak* (Bangla New Year celebration), *Eid* day for Muslims, *Nobanna Utsab* (festival of harvesting), and *Puja-Parban* for Hindus and so on. We are proud to be a part of such richness of cultural traditions."

A further strategy that Mongkui demonstrated was the use of cooperative groups. He divided the class into five buzz groups and instructed them to discuss the concept of a *Fair* ' with a view to them preparing and organising a fair. Mongkui provided the instruction clearly, "You will get ten minutes to complete the work including report preparation". He asked every group to nominate one team leader and one reporter. He

clarified the role of the team leader (to lead the discussion) and the reporter (to summarise the discussion to be presented). Then I observed that Mongkui was supervising the activities of groups and provoking them to think in-depth. Finally, the team leader from each group came to present their thoughts with a plan. I was surprised to see that Ashita represented her group. I viewed this as inspiring for both Ashita and her peers. After the group presentations, Mongkui summing up the entire discussion and provided a mini-lecture on the different characteristics of a Bengali traditional fair. At the end of the class, he wrote a topic on the blackboard and instructed students to note down in their notebook "Bengali culture is non-communal²⁵ and humanitarian". Then Mongkui said, "It will be an individual homework assignment. You will have to think about the given topic. You will need to submit at least one written page on the theme in the day after tomorrow's class."

Immediately after the class I interviewed Mongkui and asked him to describe his understanding of teaching and learning. He emphasised his understanding that as teacher he had an influence on students' needs and on the cultural context. In a classroom with a diverse range of students, understanding the students' background was important to him. He further explained activities undertaken in the class:

Although Biju was not covered in the textbook, students were familiar with this festival. I showed a picture from a Biju festival to help students understand about the nature of a general festival and fair. This was designed to help students relate their experiences to the text. If a lesson engages the prior knowledge of students, it could support their interest

He pointed out the importance of selecting examples and teaching aids that have a link to students' context. Mongkui acknowledged the limited resources to procure teaching aids for every lesson. For this reason he tried to prepare teaching aids using no-cost or low-cost materials, which could be collected from the within school and local surroundings. Then he presented another example from the lesson I observed, "I used a page from a calendar on which there was a picture of the water festival [a tribal

²⁵ In the way it is used Bangladesh's education policy this terms means non-partisan or non-sectarian. In fact, Bangla meaning of the word 'non-communal' is different than traditional meaning. It denotes as a sense of free from religious fundamentalism and secularism, as well as living in peace all together in the community irrespective of creed, caste and religion. The Speaker of the National Parliament perceived such 'non-communal' characteristics as "A kind of social harmony has been established among people of all religion here as all can practice their own faith freely in the country" (Chaudhury, cited in *The Financial Express*, 2016, February 13).

festival]”. He realised that it was important to engage students using attractive images such as from posters, pictures or other aids. He further stated, “When students have the curiosity about the lesson, they will definitely learn”.

Mongkui further mentioned that his philosophy of teaching involved meeting students’ needs. For example, he stated, “As a teacher, my aim is to build confidence in students through creating an atmosphere with a sense of fun”. However he added, “Making the lesson fun for students is sometimes challenging”. He elaborated with an example from the water festival discussed in class, and he said,

During this festival, we throw water at each other to make sure that our previous year’s sorrows are washed away. Similarly, throwing water at students could wipe away their fear of study. As a teacher, I offer various cues to students to support independent learning.

Observation of and discussion with Mongkui illustrated how a teacher can employ a range of techniques and strategies to provide a stimulating learning environment for students. At the same time, he considered the cultural backgrounds of the students while presenting festival examples. Using clear speech, praise and maintaining eye contact with students with disabilities ensured their participation in the lesson. Throughout the lesson Mongkui used a variety of strategies to support learning. These included a mini-lecture, listing items on the blackboard, group-based discussion and presentation, and an individual assignment. Mongkui was clear in our discussion that he values and tries hard to ensure student engagement with class lessons.

Teachers’ understanding of teaching and inclusion

The following section focuses on how educators in Basanti Model High School conceptualised inclusive education. Data showed that the school perceived inclusion on two dimensions: the first was to accommodate diversity, and the second was teaching children with disabilities. The data supported classroom observations and indicated that school was progressing well in their journey towards inclusive education.

Inclusive education is accommodating diversity

An important step in exploring the school’s inclusive education practice was to understand how teachers and administrators conceptualised inclusive education. I began this school visit by interviewing the head teacher, assistant head teacher and teachers and asking them about their understanding of inclusion. According to the head

teacher, inclusive education was a strategy to educate all children in the school. This involved providing everyone an equal opportunity to learn. When I asked for further explanation he commented that inclusive education was inevitable for the school, as the classrooms were inclusive and multicultural in nature. He then stated that inclusive education meant including and accommodating students from diverse ethnic backgrounds as well as children with disabilities. At this point, the head teacher raised a question: "How can our diverse range of students be taught without our teachers having inclusiveness on their mind?" He also stated that inclusion was dependent on teachers' practices: "Without being thoughtful about all students, teachers' teaching could not be inclusive."

Teachers' multiple perspectives of inclusive education

The group interview with teachers highlighted they had multiple perspectives on *inclusive education*. Although participants were quiet initially, after several gentle prompts and questions they began to respond. I used cues and prompts such as "I am not clear about the..."; "What do you mean by....?"; "Tell me more?", ; "Did I understand correctly?" The following quotes from the discussion illustrate the variety of perspectives of participants in response to my question *Tell me about inclusive education*:

- I may have a limited understandings; it seems that it is all about promoting educational opportunities and arranging education for all students in the classroom;
- For me, it is about including children with disabilities in the classroom and teaching them with equal importance - just like other students in the classroom;
- It seems something good not only for children with disabilities, but also for all in the classroom. It is about extending the scope of education for all children including children with disabilities.

A series of interesting and informative discussions took place within the group interviews. Several examples are included below to illustrate.

Aninta said, "I don't know what is in education policy. I believe that all children can learn together, and have the right to receive education in the same place".

In response Mongkui, who has participated in inclusive education training, stated, “Listen Aninta! That is the essence of inclusive education. In fact, inclusive education involves teaching students according to their level and needs.”

At this point, Sunil added, “It could be a strategy for improving our school practice”. Then I looked towards a female teacher, Sulekha Roy, and encouraged her to voice her ideas of teaching in an inclusive classroom. She described her curiosity and her thinking about the issues of education for children with disabilities. She realised that the meaning of teaching was something different in an inclusive classroom. She added:

Cleaning your hand, cleaning your face, cleaning your body are not the solutions. The real solution is cleaning the heart, cleaning the brain, and cleaning the mind which is full of sin and sadness.....As a teacher to teach in the classroom, don't only see with your eyes, you must see with your brain, with your heart, and with your mind which is full of goodness, and real wisdom.

At this point, Rangamilla nodded vigorously and stated, “Yes, yes, yes, it may express a child’s finest feeling of belongingness, and the appeal is immediate and direct. It may produce deep personal and emotional satisfaction for the family that their children are like others.”

Mongkui then added, “The child, whether disabled or not, needs the opportunity, through educational activities, to belong and to achieve.”

The influence of ethnic religious beliefs

In the group interview some teachers attempted to relate inclusion to their cultural identity and social beliefs. Sunil, a Chakma teacher, stated that, from their ethnic point of view, “supporting students with disabilities is to honour humanity”.

As the conversation progressed, it became apparent that indigenous beliefs influenced teaching and learning in the school’s classrooms. This was particularly noticeable among the Chakma teachers. They reported that they traditionally believed in guardian spirits that protect them. Although Buddhism dominates their life, as they followed Theravada Buddhism, they also believed in many spirits, including some Hindu Goddesses.

Akhil, a Chakma teacher, stated:

My personal beliefs drive me to teach children with disabilities. As they are the inhabitants of a disadvantaged group, we have some responsibility for them. If we are compassionate to the disadvantaged, then the benevolent spirits will

protect us from the effect of any malevolent spirits that cause diseases and destroy crops.

At this point, Nikhil, another Chakma teacher, said, "We do care about children with disabilities in the school because such compassionate actions mediate between me and the world of spirits."

In a query regarding such indigenous beliefs, Sumon, a Bengali teacher, elaborated: "They [Chakma] think serving children with disabilities in the school is like a ritual that they arrange to prevent illness and crop damage." He further added, "My religion (Islam) also advocates serving those who need support. As disabled children are in need of support, I try to help them to understand the content of my class, even providing support after class."

Inclusive teaching is like weaving: Relating to ethnic values

Aninta, like other teachers interviewed, compared her teaching with the traditional values of weaving. She reported that in most of the ethnic customs, including Chakma, Marma, and Tripura, women are often engaged in weaving to make intricate tapestries using the back-strap loom called a *ben*. She described this as follows: "The women are craftspeople weaving on a handloom. It's a time-consuming process to get a finished cloth. Women combine intricacy of design with muted or vibrant colours. Like weaving, teaching is a matter of passion." She further said:

Like the different coloured wool used in weaving, diverse students are in the class. As a teacher, it's my duty to know each of my students and their needs. Similar to the richness of weaving motifs created directly on the loom using the discontinuous weft technique, I must recognise the needs of individual students and respond to their calls. Within our weaving of teaching, children with disabilities are special but unique types of texture that demand particular attention from the weavers.

Aninta further elaborated:

For us, weaving is considered to be a female-only pursuit and the skills needed to weave using a waist loom are traditionally passed on from mother to daughter. The waist loom involves painstaking work that requires years of practice to master. Teaching is quite similar. It also requires thinking carefully and also needs years of practice to learn how to teach all children especially children with disabilities.

As Aninta described her teaching experiences, she reported having observed some lessons of her colleagues at the beginning of her career. Much like creating a novel design while weaving, she tried various strategies in her classes. She described building a student's interest and engagement in class. The student did not appear to understand her lessons. Aninta then discussed the challenge with colleagues and they recommended some strategies to support the student. In the next class involving the student, Aninta altered the seating arrangement so the student was seated near to her desk so that he could easily see her face. She also started to use more objects as teaching aids, such as visual images, in her lessons. Over a period of time, she discovered that the student became interested and engaged with the class.

Aninta also emphasised the need for teachers to develop friendly relationships with students. Again she contrasted her approach to teaching with weaving practices. Beautiful waist loom designs and products were the result of passionate teaching practices and generations of collective knowledge. Similarly, improving teaching to provide a fully inclusive setting requires passionate and collaborative teachers. According to Aninta, teaching and weaving are similar in many ways. Both require detailed planning and sustained attention. Just as a slip in concentration can ruin a whole piece in weaving, failure to concentrate on the needs of a disabled child may negatively influence his or her engagement in learning.

Transforming the school to be more inclusive

Basanti Model High School appeared to have several initiatives underway to enhance its provision of inclusive education. These initiatives related to the school's infrastructure, policies, community awareness of disability, and altering assessment policies. This section describes these initiatives.

Change in infrastructure

Observations of the school's physical environment revealed that there were several specific infrastructures designed to accommodate students with disabilities. The head teacher noted that a new building was constructed with a ramp to ensure accessibility for children with physical disabilities. However, resource constraints meant the existing older building was not altered. The head teacher also described a change in classroom allocation for a student with physical disabilities. He reported that the student's class had originally been scheduled on the first floor of a building with no ramp access. As soon as he was advised of this he requested the class be reallocated to the ground floor.

Further recent developments reported included provision of an accessible toilet for students with disabilities and accommodation facilities for three students with disabilities in the newly constructed school hostel.

Change in the School Policies: ‘Disability’ as an integrated element

The head teacher described the changes they had made in school practices in the attempt to move forward towards inclusive education. He said in the interview that they had modified all of their school policies to accommodate the needs of students with different abilities. They had adopted disability as an integrated agenda for all school activities. He reported that they had introduced a culture of supporting children with disabilities in the school. They were discussing the issues related to disability in all of their staff meetings. Moreover, they were also providing advice to parents on how to take care of their disabled child’s education even in their Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings.

During the interview, the assistant head teacher, Pulkhet, said that the school policy was different just ten years back as then there had been no student with a disability. He explained that the school policy was not inclusive at that time to welcome children with disabilities. Therefore, they had no obligation to include children who had a disability. Gradually, their effort to embrace inclusive education was accelerated by the government policy. He informed me that the teachers’ awareness level was increased in the school since they had adopted disability as an integrated matter in their school policy. Describing the effect of such change in the policy, Pulkhet related back to the previous time and said that their limited understanding of disabilities excluded those children from education for an extended period.

Regarding the change they had brought into their policy, Pulkhet stated that they had made the school discipline rules flexible for students with disabilities. Moreover, they were giving a tuition waiver for them. Teachers were instructed to show that they love and care about children with disabilities in the classroom. They had also brought a change in the assessment policy for children with disabilities that will be discussed in more detail in the later sections of this chapter.

Effort to increase awareness: Day observance

Both the head teacher and SMC president reported an increasing social awareness about disabilities. Therefore, the school had undertaken various activities to support increased awareness among stakeholders. These activities involved approaches to the Karbaries

and parents of students. As an example, the head teacher reported the school had added several specific days of celebration to the school. These were World Book Day (23rd April); World White Cane Safety Day (15 October); World Autism Awareness Day and the National Day of Persons with Disabilities (2 April); and International Literacy Day (8 September). Each day involved various activities such as rallies, essay competitions, cultural and discussion ceremonies. Members of the school community were invited to attend these celebrations with the goal of raising awareness of and support for persons with disabilities.

An inclusive assessment policy for students with disabilities

Children with disabilities are often disadvantaged by existing traditional forms of academic assessment (Mitchell, 2010). Zvoleyko, Kalashnikova and Klimenko (2016) argued: “In order to implement inclusive practice, it is necessary to create special educational conditions for children with disabilities,” and asserted the tensions of assessment or standard needed to be resolved. The head teacher of Basanti Model High School described several changes the school had made to accommodate the needs of students with disability who might experience challenges in meeting the examination requirements of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) and the Education Board. These changes included teachers providing support for students’ comprehension of examination questions, the provision of an extra 30 minutes to complete examinations. A further change was directly focused on students with visual impairment. The head teacher stated, “They can now write with a Braille machine, and their answer scripts are evaluated with flexibility”. Although centrally prescribed examination regulations allow for a sighted writer to support students with visual impairments this does not necessarily help students who are proficient in Braille. The head teacher reported: “A blind student told me that he would like to write in Braille as the sighted writer may misinterpret his thoughts.” The school staff discussed this request and decided to accommodate the use of Braille. This required a staff member to undertake specific training in the use of Braille. The use of Braille was now available for students with visual impairment. This account was supported by data from a discussion with Pulkhet, the assistant head teacher. He presented an account of a student with visual impairment in grade 8. Nitish was considered to be blind from birth and had become a proficient Braille user. However, he was initially unable to use Braille during examinations. Nitish’s academic performance was poor. As soon as the school changed its approach to Braille use, Nitish’s performance increased. Pulkhet reported:

Since Nitish has been allowed to use Braille in examinations, his results have improved...I guess that the freedom to write in Braille instead of depending on a sighted writer can make a big difference for a blind student. It increased his confidence and enabled him to complete exams independently, like his peers.

During a classroom observation of Nitish, I noted that he appeared to be enjoying the lesson. Inspection of the school records showed that Nitish's achievement in examinations had increased sharply as soon as he was permitted to use Braille. Examination of school's academic revealed that Nitish got higher grades in most of the subjects after the system of using Braille machine to write answers in the examination had introduced by the school. Nitish's classroom teacher, Sunil, reported that it was challenging, but not difficult, to accommodate Nitish in his class. He also stated the importance of having a member of staff proficient in Braille use to support marking of examination scripts. Sunil noted that through the use of Braille Nitish could fully demonstrate his academic abilities and aspire to achieving GPA-5 in his future SSC examination. Sunil remarked that this simple shift in the school policy was one of the significant changes to accommodate the needs of all students.

Teachers' professional development

Discussion with the head teacher revealed the school was taking steps to ensure teachers were equipped to practice inclusive education appropriately. The head teacher described this as creating a positive school culture for ensuring inclusiveness. He reported an increased sense of cooperation and sharing of knowledge among staff. He described efforts to support teachers to attend professional development events and then on their return. He said, "We usually arrange a training programme for all teachers, so that the teacher could share his or her newly acquired knowledge and skills." The assistant head teacher, Pulkhet, also reported the he and two other teachers, Mongkui and Sashimala, had formed a panel to support other teachers in providing inclusive education for students with disabilities.

This panel had participated in a specific inclusive education training programme. Mongkui described the programme as involving a four-day orientation training at the nearby government teachers' training college. They then returned to school for 15 days during which time they were to complete an assignment focused on children with disabilities from their surrounding areas. The second phase of the training program involved a further four days based at the district headquarters under the supervision of

the district education officer. The main objective of this phase was to broaden their understanding of education for children with disabilities. At this point, Sashimala commented that they had learnt many new things about how to teach children with disabilities. On their return to school, they conducted a workshop for all staff to share their newly acquired knowledge and skills.

The challenge of limited resources

The staff and teachers at Basanti Model High School also reported a number of challenges the school faced. These challenges were related to physical and human resources. The president of the SMC stated "This school is beset with various problems. We don't have enough resources and qualified teachers. The classrooms and backup facilities are not sufficient." He added, "Despite our many initiatives, we still have challenges to accommodate students comfortably in the classroom." He also reported that student numbers were increasing and classes were becoming overcrowded. The head teacher identified the existing infrastructure as an obstacle, reporting that the fixed types of furniture (that is, rows of tables and benches) in the classrooms were not conducive to participatory teaching and learning activities. Similarly, teachers also reported the limited teaching aids and logistical support available to support students with disabilities.

Despite the positive impression I gained from my observations and interviews about the school's inclusiveness towards students with disabilities, some concern about resourcing was raised by Sumon who stated, "We only have nine students who have disabilities, so is it appropriate to spend a lot of money on them? For example, constructing the access ramp required a significant amount of money."

Further discussion of emergent themes

This case study of Basanti Model High School has highlighted the progress made by staff at a remote school towards including students from diverse ethnic backgrounds and students with disabilities, despite the limited resources available to them. As the school staff encountered challenges, they came up with their own contextualised strategies. The issues and how they addressed these provide models for other schools in Bangladesh. This case illustrates how inclusion can occur in a school with a diverse student group.

The school's inclusive education practices were underpinned by indigenous values and religious belief systems. The school practices appeared to support Martin Luther King Jr's notion of a "Beloved Community" (Hall & Campano, 2014; Marsh, 2005; Smith & Smith, 2000). King's concept captures the sense of a community really caring for all its members in the same ways as a family cares for its loved ones (Hillis & Woolworth, 2008). The community surrounding Basanti Model High School had created the school through its love for its members and that same love, and this sense of responsibility made the teachers of that community care for all students including those with special needs. Their stories provide a basis for re-conceptualising inclusive education from an indigenous perspective. The school practice provided insight into the ways that the positive attitude of school and community may create access to education for students with disabilities. The dominant discourses of aspiration that come from strong ethnic values have led to a flourishing of the hopes and dreams of educating children with disabilities, and have induced the school and locality to support the well-being of children with disabilities and be responsive to their needs. Carrington (1999) argued that the social and cultural context of the school affects the implementation of inclusive education significantly because the success of inclusion largely depends on teachers' action which is shaped by their beliefs and determined by the social and cultural context of the school.

The case of the school as a whole reveals that a collaborative culture and strong support from the community could enhance the school initiatives to be inclusive. Three constantly overarching themes emerged that are linked to the overriding theme 'beloved community'. These are:

- Ethnic values translated into inclusive education practices;
- Collaborative culture of knowledge transferred from one teacher to another; and,
- Adoption of assessment procedures incorporating Braille for students with impaired vision.

Ethnic values translated into inclusive education practices

The values that prompted care were also translated into specifics of practice. Although the school had few resources, teachers found ways to develop low-cost teaching aids and to develop simple but targeted strategies that would encourage students with a disability to participate in class and be successful. Teachers' narratives explored that most of the teachers were from the ethnic community and relating their aspirations of

inclusion back with their ethnic beliefs and values. For example, the ethnic traditional faith in the 'guardian of spirits' influenced some teachers to take a kindly but clearly focused position for educating children with disabilities. Sulekha perceived the needs for a positive attitude teaching in an inclusive classroom. Mongkui emphasised on understanding of students' needs and their cultural context. Teachers' narratives reflected that the notion of inclusion is deeply rooted in their ethnic worldview related to their dominant beliefs and ethnic way of life. They perceived that serving the disadvantaged peoples like children with disabilities is as to serve the 'Goddess'. Such values and beliefs are also conveyed through their teaching. A culture of care to the children with disabilities involves fostering their inclusion. Miles, Lene and Merumeru (2014) argued for the importance of indigenous inclusive values for implementing inclusive education.

Collaborative culture of knowledge transfer from one teacher to another

As a collaborative culture emerged from the teachers' realisation of serving children with disabilities, this school case shows an inspiring picture of utilising particular teacher's expertise in supporting other teachers for dealing with children with disabilities in their inclusive classrooms. The presence in the school of a teacher who had actively participated in specialist training in teaching students with disabilities created a strong resource within the school. The training appeared to have not only informed his own practice, but also given him the means to support and encourage other teachers to adapt their practice to meet students' needs. Such practice is rarely evident in Bangladesh secondary schools, as several researchers have expressed their concern about the limited professional development opportunities for secondary teachers that exist in Bangladesh (Alam, 2016; Howes, Grimes & Shohel, 2011; Khan, Rahaman, Hornby, Sutherland, Everatt & Greenwood, 2013; Thornton, 2006). Thornton (2006) explored how a collaborative culture of sharing knowledge and expertise among secondary teachers in Bangladesh, in terms of "support given from one teacher to another" (p.181), He has not yet been established. Alam (2016) asked policymakers to think about 'alternative processes' of teacher's development to meet the needs of the rural community because the existing professional development options for Bangladesh teachers are highly centralised and do not fully align with their needs. He reported the case of a school that developed school-based teacher development strategies. This school case illustrates an alternative way of supporting teachers. Howes, Grimes and

Shohel (2011) suggested the importance of such attention to the institutional context of teachers' practices.

Adopted assessment procedures for students with visually impairments

Mitchell (2014) recognised the needs of adapting processes of teaching and learning and assessment for students with disabilities to implement inclusive education successfully. One very specific initiative taken within the school was the adaptation of Braille. The school recognised the rights of using Braille in the exam for students who are visually impaired or unable to see at all instead of having a sighted 'reader and writer'. Bourke and Mentis (2014) argued that inclusive education has the potential to change the assessment process to accommodate the needs of learners with disabilities. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to find creative ways of assessment. However, a significant challenge in most Bangladesh schools is that most teachers are not competent in reading and marking a Braille script. In this connection, to uphold the rights of students with visual impairment, the school trained one teacher on the use of Braille to provide support to other teachers as well as to students with visual impairment. Such provision has leveraged the potential of visual impaired students to achieve success in the examination and reduced their dependency on sighted writers when taking part in any paper and pencil test. Bourke and Mentis (2014) emphasise that "students with visual impairments can develop the necessary skills and perform at grade level with accessible materials, appropriate accommodations, and knowledgeable, supportive teachers" (p. 174).

Teachers' narratives highlighted the positive effect of such initiatives on the inclusion of children with visual impairment in the school. Posey and Henderson (2012) in their study argued that Braille allows students with visual impairment 'to gain better access to more information' (p.488). Rosenblum and Herzberg (2015) reported the reaction of a grade 8 student with visual impairment in regards to using Braille or accessible materials "I like to see what is going on. I am clueless if I have to have someone read it to me. I have to read it myself to help my understanding" (p.179).

Conclusion

Conkling (2015) suggests: "We must be aware that our everyday lives in segregated neighbourhoods and schools often make us blind to inequity and exclusion" (p.4). Exclusion and inequity in education occur in schools due to poverty, ability and individuality. This case has illustrated that exclusion and inequity can be addressed through communal cohesion. Members of the school and its wider community

collaborated to ensure the education of children with disabilities. The indigenous value system appeared to form a culture of mutual respect, as Anita said, “Children with disabilities are special but unique types of texture that demand particular attention from the weavers.” Children with disabilities had been welcomed at the school since its inception. As a result, the journey towards inclusion reflected a different story from other schools has portrayed in this study. The goal of inclusion in this school was determined by the dominant ethnic values of integrity and the desire to create opportunities of flourishing for all students. These values echo the statement of Martin Luther King, Jr: “We must always be aware of the fact that our ultimate goal is integration, and that desegregation is only a first step on the road to the good society” (Washington, 1986, p.118). Such indigenous values and religious beliefs have importance in promoting inclusive education, as this Chapter illustrated how ethnic values and beliefs supported inclusion and well-being of children with disabilities in this remote school.

Chapter Seven

Inclusion: Reality or Make-believe?

Being a teacher is always challenging. The challenges are compounded when students with disabilities are included in the class. It is mainly because of our lack of knowledge regarding education of children with disabilities (Salim, an Assistant Teacher)

Introduction

Damayanti High School is located in the heart of the capital city, Dhaka. This case study demonstrates the gaps that can exist between national or local policies and the practices within schools. This case highlights many challenges that schools and teachers experience as they seek to understand what inclusive education is, and how to practice it. Although teachers described positive attitudes towards teaching children with disabilities, they expressed many doubts about the success of inclusion in the school. It appeared that the school was awaiting further resources and information to support inclusion of students with disabilities, and teachers' reports were in stark contrast with observations and data collected from interviews with parents and students.

This city school was selected to provide a contrast with the two previous schools which are located in remote areas. This school is well managed and a primary school, as well as a private teacher's training college (B.Ed. College), is attached to this school. Although the school is theoretically open for all children, enrolment somehow limits the inclusion of children with disabilities. The main reason of selection is the location of the school, and an aim of this study is to investigate how inclusion is taking place in a school that is located beside a crowded and busy city street.

Data for this case was collected from inspections of school records, classroom observations and interviews with school stakeholders. Participants included eight teachers who were teaching in classes that included children with disabilities, the head teacher and the assistant head teacher. I also spoke with several students with disabilities, and with the father of a student with a disability. My personal observations and field notes provide further insights about what actually was happening in the school.

The overall interpretation of teacher narratives revealed that most of the teachers, including the head teacher, were in favour of separate special education for educating children with disabilities at secondary school. Even though, at a policy level the school appeared committed to the national goal of inclusive education, the school staff were not ready to embrace inclusion for students with disabilities. Factors contributing to this included the school's location and the limited resources available. Despite the challenges they faced, several teachers described innovative ideas and thinking around supporting students with disabilities.

Introducing the school: Facilities and background

Founded in 1975, Damayanti High School is a co-educational non-government secondary school, located in the heart of the capital city, Dhaka. The school roll included a total of 900 students (40% girls) in years 1 to 10. Only six students were noted as having a disability. The school staff included 32 teachers, of which eight are assigned to the primary section. All the teachers had at least a bachelor's degree in education. The school facilities consisted of one three-storey building and four tin-clad buildings. Although a ramp connected the ground floor with the schoolyard, the stairs appeared the only way of entering the first and second floors of the main building.

The school's history can be traced from its beginnings in the 1970s as a primary school. As there was no nearby high school, the head teacher of the primary school began to develop community support for extending the school to accommodate senior students. Support was received from parents and staff at a nearby University, who helped petition central government to use the land and a classroom of the primary school for secondary school activities. In its first year the school only enrolled 13 students for grade 6. Three teachers (including the head teacher) were assigned to teaching and learning activities. Interestingly, these teachers served the school for approximately two years without remuneration. From this small beginning the school grew over the following years with the addition of tin-clad buildings and in 1977 students in grades 7, 8 and 9 were enrolled. Support for expansion of the school was also solicited from and provided by the University. Since then the University has continued to provide governance and financial support. In 1979, 10 out of 12 participating students successfully passed the SSC examination.

The school has a rich culture and provides a number of extracurricular options for students. For example, the school regularly hosts cultural performances; there is a Debating Club, Scouts, Girl Guides, and a Reading Club. My observations suggested that teachers and students enjoyed a level of friendliness. The school teachers reported a high level of attendance among students suggesting a positive student experience and a sense of belonging.

Tania: A student with visual and physical impairments

What I went through shouldn't happen to anyone... but because of these experiences I would like to be a teacher in future so that I can teach students not to be cruel to any disabled child... (Tania)

This information presented in this section was primarily obtained from an interview with Tania. She was in grade 7 and experienced a moderate level of physical disability and a mild visual impairment. The interview took place at the school premises, along with two of her classmates who accompanied her. These students also contributed their opinions and perspectives during the interview. Tania's father also provided further perspective and explanation of the issues reported by Tania. The information described provided an account of a student's experience of the school's efforts to support her inclusion.

Growing impetus

To begin our discussion I asked Tania how she felt in the school. Her initial response was that she liked the school, as she had some good friends. Tania reported that her current experiences were more positive than earlier experiences she had in the school. She reported that her early experiences were not pleasant as she had few friends, with most of the students avoiding her. Tania told of being on the receiving end of negative attitudes and comments from classmates as well as teachers. She remarked that she could never forget those experiences, and said: "My heart broke when I found everybody was looking at me as if I was a strange animal from the zoo". Tania's father corroborated her experiences by stating that she used to regularly resist going to school and regularly complained that her difference was not well accepted at school. Changes in Tania's experiences came when her mother began to accompany her throughout the day during school hours. Tania's experiences suggest that awareness of disabilities and attitudes towards students with disabilities within the school gradually improved over

time. This is consistent with a recent UNICEF report (UNICEF, 2014) indicating positive changes are taking place in Bangladesh with more positive attitudes about children with disabilities.

Bullying and the school's response

Tania's experiences suggested she was bullied verbally, emotionally and socially. Verbal bullying included being called names such as "Pagol [mad], Shamuk [snail], Kawshim [turtle] and Kana [blind]. Tania described these words as insulting to her. Describing the nature of emotional bullying, she stated,

Often I listen to my classmates and teachers but I could do nothing. It hurt me. I always try to do everything by myself, without depending on others. How long can I tolerate such grief? Their evil behaviour made me ill-tempered. I understand that my reactions might give them more reason to laugh at me.

Tania was hurt when her peers avoided her. For example, she reported being excluded from class activity groups. Tania's reports were supported by statements from her peers who reported, "She is not as normal as us", "She is boring", and "She suddenly gets really angry."

Tania's narrative highlighted that she experienced bullying at school and little if any action was taken to reduce or prevent bullying. Tania stated, "What is the benefit of making a complaint after being bullied?" and "... I used to complain about being bullied. But I noticed that teachers did not take my complaint seriously". This suggests the school staff were not effective in creating a safe environment for students with disabilities.

Although bullying takes many forms and is unacceptable, it is also common in schools (Tshotsho & Thwala, 2015). Huggins (2016) suggested that stigmatisation of students was a leading cause of bullying in schools. He presented an example of a child with autism spectrum disorder who was withdrawn from school due to bullying and the inaction of school staff. Thus, it is crucial for schools to create a bullying-free environment for meaningful inclusion of students with disabilities (Biernbaum & Lotyczewski, 2015). This is particularly important considering evidence that suggests these students are at higher risk of experiencing bullying (Blake, Zhou, Kwok & Benz, 2016; Rose, Simpson & Preast, 2016; Yell, Katsiyannis, Rose & Houchins, 2016). An important consideration for Damayanti High School is how staff can address issues

related to bullying in order to support and include students with disabilities. The following sections further details Tania's experiences related to inclusion in the school.

Location of Tania's class

During my classroom observation, I noted Tania's class was located on the third floor. In our discussion, I asked if the location of her class created any problems. In response, she reported that climbing stairs was difficult for her, particularly at the end of school activities. This is when other students appear to be in a hurry to leave the building. Tania stated that she waited behind before proceeding to the stairs. During these experiences she noted that some of her peers refer to her using the words 'turtle' or 'snail'.

Participation in class

Tania reported limited scope to participate in class discussions. For example, she stated "very rarely do teachers ask me a question in class". During the discussion she highlighted two issues that may contribute to this. These were the class seating arrangement and difficulty getting the teacher's attention. During the classroom observation I saw that Tania was seated in the back row. I asked about this seating arrangement. Tania responded that she was late that day, therefore could not find any room in the front rows, and the teacher did not offer to re-arrange seating. Although Tania had no difficulty sitting, she reported that being in the back row made it difficult to read the blackboard due to her visual difficulties. She stated her desire to have a dedicated space in the front row and had requested this from the teacher. However, no action had been taken.

During my time in the class, I observed that Tania did not raise her hand or attempt to draw her teacher's attention. I asked Tania about this and she became silent. One of her friends reported that Tania feels uncomfortable about asking teachers questions. Tania then contributed that she had difficulty understanding the material presented by the teacher and also felt shy about asking for clarification. After a pause and sigh, Tania offered that her previous negative experiences were holding her back from asking questions: "Teachers have said before not to waste their time with silly questions. It hurt me, so I stopped asking questions."

The assessment system

Tania experienced limited success in school assessments. When first asked about her assessments, Tania was silent. A peer reported that Tania managed a pass-mark in four out of 10 subjects in the last school examination. When Tania started to speak out about assessments she reported that she could not get satisfactory marks in English, Mathematics, Physical Education and Health, and Fine Arts. I was surprised that Tania had difficulty in Physical Education and Health, and Fine Arts. When I reviewed the school records it was apparent that almost all students achieved full marks in these two subjects. Tania further reported with some sadness: “My disability affected my achievement in these two subjects”. Her Physical Education and Health examination results highlighted the challenges she experienced. The exam had theory and practical components. The theory part was assessed by way of a written exam, in which Tania obtained good scores. As she could not perform any aspect of the practical part, she was not given any marks. As a result, she failed the examination. She further described that the instructor asked her to perform individual physical exercise which included walking in a parade format. However, she was unable to do this and therefore failed. Tania also reported that she experienced motor control difficulties which influenced her performance on the Fine Arts drawing exam. She added, “Mathematics is difficult, as the information does not penetrate my mind. I couldn’t understand what my English teacher was saying in class”. Tania’s experiences suggest the school’s assessment and examination systems and processes did not include flexibility or accommodation for students who experienced disabilities.

Concern from Tania’s father

Tania’s father, Hashim, reported a similar experience to that of Nishi’s father (see Chapter Five). Hashim had not been contacted by school staff about Tania’s education or school participation. Although he had sought information from teachers, no support was offered and no teacher could suggest a single strategy. Hashim reported that Tania often complained about her difficulties in following the teacher’s instructions and in understanding the material presented in class. As a result, Hashim had employed a private tutor to support Tania in her understanding of subject textbook content. Hashim also reported school issues such as the inaccessible infrastructure and Tania’s experience of bullying. In order to support Tania’s attendance at school Hashim would drop her off on the way to his workplace each day.

Hashim was frustrated by the responses of school staff to his approaches for information and support. For example, he was told that Tania was different and not as normal as other students. In addition he reported that he had approached the head teacher regarding Tania's difficulty accessing her class by the stairs. The head teacher responded that Tania was not the only student in the school and that the school had to support many children. It was also suggested to Hashim that Tania "might not be okay". In response Hashim stopped contacting the head teacher. Hashim exclaimed "Oh, What I can do! That's the school!" He also expressed being mindful of the need to maintain a positive relationship with the school.

Teachers' perspectives on supporting students with disabilities

Analysis of teachers' narratives suggests it could be possible to cluster participating teachers' perspectives of inclusive education and students with disabilities into four categories. These are i) perspectives that highlight complexities; ii) perspectives that highlight the risk of falling off rhythm in teaching for other students; iv) perspectives that indicate limited understanding of disability and deficit thinking; and iv) perspectives aligned with change in teaching practice. These perspectives are discussed below in relation to data reported by Damayanti High School staff.

Perspectives that highlight complexities

The head teacher, Mizanur Rahman, reported a contrastive understanding between defining and practising inclusive education. In regards to defining inclusion he stated "...inclusion means including all children in the classroom, and concurrently, ensuring a quality education for all children". However, he further stated that inclusive education "... seems a very natural and an expected phenomenon when we define it, but it is more complex and complicated when we try to implement inclusive education". He reported this complexity as the need to actively encourage teachers in the school to support children with disabilities in class and around the school. He further explained the challenges facing teachers by highlighting that each class included approximately 70 students and each class had a fixed time period of 30 to 45 minutes. And within that time, teachers were expected to teach their planned academic syllabus which would leave little time for individual student support. Therefore, the presence of children with disabilities, in the name of inclusion, would create a source of tension of among teachers. Mizanur stated that the presence of students with disabilities in classes could

place additional pressure on teachers, especially young teachers who might be more vulnerable to pressures. Explaining this, he highlighted the lack of training for teachers and the lack of sufficient support. Mizanur also raised a concern about impact of students with disabilities on the school's overall public examination results.

Mizanur clearly stated his belief that a *special school* rather than *mainstream school* would be better for children with disabilities. He also questioned the intentions of inclusive education policies that were developed without establishing more school-based support mechanisms. Mizanur did not think his school was ready to embrace inclusion. He reported that attempts to educate children with disabilities in mainstream schools were inconsistent with the notion of quality education for all. However, he also acknowledged that, as a head teacher, he needed to adhere to the central government policies, despite the challenges these presented.

Perspectives that highlight the risk of falling off rhythm

During a group interview several teachers expressed concern that the presence of students with disabilities in their classes would hamper their natural pace of teaching. These concerns were described with examples of recent experiences. A maths teacher, Amina, reported class disruptions due to the presence of a child with disability. She described a recent incident which resulted in her spending half of the class managing student disputes caused by the destructive behaviour of a child with intellectual disabilities. This included a student spitting and shouting at others. Another teacher, Sahina, reported similar experiences with another student with intellectual disability. She described a student who was bullied by others (for example, being called *pagol* {mad}) and then started shouting and throwing books and pens. Sahina reported that her strategies for preventing bullying did not work, and, as a result, the class atmosphere was often tense. A third teacher, Rashid, described his attempts to engage students with disabilities in group activities. He observed that students with disabilities struggled to negotiate effectively with peers and often were a distraction for groups.

Perspectives that indicate limited understanding of disability and deficit thinking

Discussions with teachers at Damayanti High School revealed a general view that students with disabilities presented many obstacles to a successful education. The head teacher recognised that most teachers struggle to teach students without disabilities due in part to large class sizes. Teachers reported their limited understanding of students

with disabilities. For example, Ahmed suggested that students with disability appear to struggle in their adjustment to the demands and pressures of high school. Several teachers reported students' mobility difficulties as a significant barrier to their participation, due to the school not being *disability friendly*. Teachers also described anti-social behaviour of students with disabilities as a barrier to their education. For example, Sahina, reported: "Obstacles arise because they can't adapt their interactions with other children in the class." She remarked that the uncontrolled behaviour of a few students was disruptive to her class teaching. At this point, Amina further focused on the perceived deficits of the children when she said: "Having less ability to learn than ordinary students is a definite barrier. This interferes with our teaching pace in lessons. The entire class suffers." A few teachers claimed that their limited awareness and understanding of students with disabilities was associated with a lack of training. Salim reported, "Being a teacher is always challenging. These challenges are compounded when there are students with disabilities in the class, mainly due to a lack of knowledge regarding children with disabilities". This was supported by Amina who said, "Our limited knowledge about teaching and learning in an inclusive setting restricts our ability to support them in class."

Perspectives aligned with change in teachers' practices

Several teachers perceived that inclusive education was bringing about change in how teachers viewed teaching and learning processes. The following findings are based on a small group of interviewed teachers who highlighted some of these changes. Tauhida was clear that inclusive education demanded change in teaching and learning practices in the classroom because of the differing needs of students. Sharifa emphasised a need to accommodate a variety of techniques for teaching students in an inclusive classroom. According to her, maintaining the attention of students with disabilities was a key challenge for teachers. Similarly, Salim reported that traditional ways of teaching, such as the *lecture method*, were not suitable for a disabled student. He stated that teaching in an inclusive class required a child-centric approach to ensure the needs of children are met. However, he reported the difficulties of introducing these methods in classes with an average of 80 students.

Sarwar was not in favour of a radical change of his teaching style. He suggested keeping an eye on children with disabilities while teaching. According to him, the major responsibility of the teacher was to focus on the potential of students with disabilities,

and that teaching must be based on building on their prior knowledge. Ahsan reported an approach to focus on students' areas of interests. Describing his experiences teaching a child with a mild intellectual disability, he said that he was successful by engaging the child in practical activities. He said:

The secret of success for a teacher in an inclusive classroom is to move forward with courage, love, encouragement and an uncompromising desire to win. Teaching would be much easier if a teacher experienced the joy of teaching while ignoring all of his or her mental exhaustion, frustration and fear.

Sharifa added that teachers should not assume that students with disabilities cannot learn. This thinking was further supported by Tauhida who described her approaches to teaching as being aware of the needs of children with disabilities as the first step. She explained that she could then develop an understanding of their strengths and limitations in order to determine teaching strategies. Tauhida also reported providing positive feedback to help motivate students.

Additional challenges for teachers

A number of additional challenges not specifically related to in-class experiences were reported by teachers. These challenges illustrated a wide range of issues that have the potential to influence teachers' day-to-day practices. The teachers' narratives reveal issues that could be clustered into four categories, each of which is presented below in relation to Damayanti High School.

The Goddess Lakshmi²⁶ and wages: Teachers' satisfaction

The importance of teachers to a school was illustrated by way of an analogy described by the assistant head teacher. He said,

According to Bengali culture, a housewife is called the Lakshmi of a house. She usually maintains the kitchen. When she is satisfied, then she can prepare delicious food for the family. Otherwise, she may not cook good food. Any anxiety she experiences might result in her preparing distasteful food for the household. If there is a lack of raw materials for cooking, the food will not be

²⁶ Lakshmi is the Hindu Goddess of fortune, wealth and prosperity [See Rhodes (2010) for more details on Lakshmi]. However, the term 'Lakshmi' has become a synonym of 'good luck' in Bengali culture.

tasty. Similar to a housewife, teachers are the Laksmi of a school. They maintain the quality of education through their teaching. If a teacher becomes mentally dissatisfied, their teaching could be affected.

At this point in the discussion, Sahina added that her wages were unsatisfactory and that this affected her ability to concentrate on her work. “How can I focus on my job?” asked Rashid while he was explaining his situation as a teacher. He reported that as a non-MPO teacher he receives a monthly salary of around 10000 TK²⁷ which made life tough for him in Dhaka.

I raised this issue during the interview with the head teacher, Mizanur. He acknowledged the current wage discrimination among teachers was an issue at Damayanti High School and other schools. Describing the effects of this discrimination, he described the following analogy: “Imagine seven people having their lunch at a dining table. Some are eating delicious, rich food, and some are eating a loaf of bread. There will be a mental barrier between these two groups.” However he stated that he was unable to influence the issue as it was a matter of government policy. Research suggests that there is an important relationship between teachers’ salaries and the quality of education provided (Figlio, 1997; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006). Akiba, Chiu, Shimizu and Liang (2012) investigated teacher incomes in 30 countries and reported that “the countries with higher average salary for experienced teachers are more likely to have higher national achievement” (p.171). The issue of teacher remuneration is explored further in the following section.

MPO and non-MPOs divide among teachers

Several teachers in the group interview identified the existing MPO system as a source of discrimination which in turn was perceived as a significant barrier to teachers providing students with high quality education. The head teacher explained the MPO process as teachers from some selected subjects being eligible to join the MPO scheme. However, there is a limit on the number of teachers who can join and there are significant variations in application across schools. The school-wide MPO pattern is often mismatched with the school’s subject pattern. As the enrolment process is complicated, Mizanur reported that he was only able to include a minimum number of teachers under the scheme. He acknowledged that some of teachers not on the MPO

²⁷ 10000 TK = 125 USD

scheme were distressed and less attentive in their work. He also reported that as the government was responsible for the scheme there was little he could do to change it. Ahmed stated that the current policy imposed an inequitable status in terms of salary and wages among teaching staff of non-government secondary schools. Amina then added that at Damayanti High School there were 12 teachers enlisted with the government MPO system, and rest were left out. Teachers employed under the MPOs were receiving higher remuneration than others. The complexity of the MPO system was described by Gopal. He had been teaching for five years. Yet, he was not included with the MPO system, and was unsure when he would be able to participate in it. While sharing this, Gopal became visibly upset and said, “When I found some novice teachers are on the MPO scheme, how am I supposed to feel? I am now frustrated and am a victim of the system”. Similar dissatisfaction was expressed by other teachers. “If you do not have job satisfaction, how can you serve your students?” asked Ahsan, and reported that his subject was not included in the MPO scheme and so he received no income from the government, with the school paying him a minimum wage.

Teachers’ workloads

Teachers at Damayanti High School reported that their workloads were a barrier to their delivery of quality education. As an example, Ahsan described his daily teaching routine involving five out of six classes across a variety of subjects and grade groups. This included teaching grades 9 and 10 Science, Higher Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. In addition his schedule included teaching grade 8 Career and Life-oriented Education, grade 6 Bangladesh and Global Studies, and primary level (grade 3) English. Ashan was adamant that this variety and intensity of classes left him feeling unprepared and struggling to maintain a sense of work-life balance. He reported being rebuked by the head teacher when attempting to discuss potential changes to his teaching load and schedule.

Ashan’s experience was corroborated by other teachers in the group interview. Salim stated that their workloads prevented them from providing individual support for students. Gopal stated, “I teach classes in many different subjects. When you became a jack of all trades, you became the master of none.”

Training and professional development

A further barrier to the provision of inclusive education was a reported lack of specific professional development. Teachers reported that inclusive education had not been presented during their pre-service training and no opportunities for in-service training were available. The head teacher also reported this as a significant barrier in developing the school's inclusiveness. He reported that most teachers had received some training on education, but not specifically on disability or inclusion. Nevertheless, some sessions in the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training did introduce inclusive education, however perhaps not sufficiently covered for teachers to develop understanding and skills to provide an inclusive classroom. Several teachers' comments echoed those of the head teacher. For example, Tauhida stated that her CPD training program included one 90 minute session dedicated to inclusive education. Amina added, "The session was not enough to grasp the meaning of inclusive education, but did create some confusion among us." At this point, Ahsan criticised the Ministry's teacher development effort and questioned how teachers could teach children with disabilities in an inclusive classroom based on a 90 minute training session. Other teachers also suggested that if the Ministry was serious about inclusive education in secondary schools, careful modification of the entire teachers' education programme was needed.

Teachers' perspective of inclusive education practice: Concerns and constraints

Observations and interviews led to the identification of a number of additional concerns and constraints. The analysis of school constraints and teacher concerns identified six themes: school location, school policies, teaching practices, individual education plans, assessment policies, and parental involvement. These themes are discussed below -

Perspective aligned with school location

Damayanti High School is located on one of Dhaka's busiest streets which experiences extreme levels of traffic. Observation data showed that the school was located in a very crowded place, and the main classroom building was located approximately 60 metres from the roadside. During my visit I observed significant traffic noise including engine noise and vehicle horns. There were no noise-dampening surfaces in the classrooms as there was no mat on the floor and the windows had no screens to reduce the noise level.

The head teacher reported that this location was not supportive of inclusive education with the main entrance of the school located on this busy main street. He observed that daily traffic congestion made it difficult for students without disabilities to cross the street. Then he added, “How could you expect a physically challenged student to cross the road? Moreover, the foot-path is mostly occupied by street hawkers.” Several teachers also identified the location of the school as a source of challenge to teach students with disabilities especially those with hearing impairment. An English language teacher, Sharifa, reported that the high levels of background noise often distracted students, as most classrooms are situated next to the main road. Similarly, the assistant head teacher, Ahmed, stated, “Massive traffic jams in the street are common. The noise produced by vehicle horns creates high levels of background noise in classrooms.”

Lack of school-based inclusive education policy

Damanyanti High School had no school-based policy regarding the inclusion and education of students with disabilities. This was consistent with the head teacher’s comment: “I have nothing to say about inclusive education and what has transpired from recent national policy changes.” In the teachers’ group interview both Gopal and Rashid identified the need for a school-based policy for supporting students with disabilities. Sahina reported that the school authorities denied her access to specific aids to support teaching children with disabilities. Salim observed that the school was not developed enough to care for children with disabilities. He also stated that he felt “kept in the dark” and uninformed about teaching children with disabilities and any school plans for implementing inclusive education.

Variable practices among schools

The head teacher was clear in his understanding that inclusive education practices might differ from school to school, as he was aware of different practices at nearby schools. He expanded on his claim by stating there was no binding guideline on how to make a school inclusive. For example, he reported several schools that denied enrolling children with disabilities yet these schools claimed they were implementing the government policy of inclusive education. From their perspective, they were educating students from different socio-economic classes, and also students with different academic abilities were in the same classroom. The head teacher asked somewhat

ironically: “Is this inclusion? My school is at least open for children with disabilities, but what about those schools which are not enrolling children with disabilities?”

The claim made by the head teacher was confirmed when I interviewed Tania’s father, Hashim. In response to a question regarding the scope of education for children with disabilities similar to Tania, Hashim described negative experiences. He visited many schools to seek admission for Tania. Hashim approached U School, where his request was rejected and he was advised to visit L School. When he expressed his unhappiness, the head teacher of U School said that his child would not be competent enough to adjust to the school system due to her disabilities. He also discovered that the secondary school admission system in Dhaka was highly competitive, with up to 20 applications per available student position received by U School. Hashim further described that his experience visiting L School also proved to be a painful experience. The head teacher spoke negatively about children with disabilities and told him that the school was not for students like Tania. Then he came to Damayanti High School and said, “At the beginning, the head teacher tried to avoid me, but I persisted and finally, my child was admitted to the school”.

Both the secondary schools, L and U, are located within a kilometre radius of Damayanti High School. Consistent with the head teacher’s report both schools have no students with disabilities. Ahmed reported that the admission system for those schools was inaccessible for children with disabilities. Sharifa added that most of the highly ranked schools in Dhaka usually reject enrolment applications of children with disabilities during their preliminary scrutinising process. Some schools also arrange an oral test as a part of their admission process to secondary level classes. If a student fails to pass the oral examination, the school will not consider the application for admission.

Individualised education plans (IEPs)

The head teacher stated that he understood the importance of individualised education plans (IEPs) in place for students with disabilities, having learned about these from training experiences and some follow-up readings. He also provided the reference to the US legislation PL 95-142, IDEA, that imposed a legal obligation of preparing IEPs for every disabled student. However when I asked about Damayanti High School’s position on IEPs, he replied, “In fact, our policy does not include IEPs as we don’t have the expertise to develop and maintain IEPs for each disabled student”. During the group

interview with teachers, I raised the question of IEPs. Most teachers had never heard the term IEP before. Some teachers reported limited awareness. Salim stated, "I heard the term in a professional discussion when I was a university student in a master of education course. I don't know how to do it though. There is no obligation to prepare one". Sarwar also reported that IEPs were not a stated policy in Bangladesh. Gopal then asked for an explanation of IEPs. After I explained this, Sahina uttered, "We are happy that we do not need to prepare IEPs. If we were required to, it would place extra pressure on us." Then Amina stated that he had attended many in-service training programmes without ever hearing about IEPs.

Assessment procedures and the questioning pattern

During the teacher interviews I was interested in their engagement with and assessment of students with disabilities. I asked several teachers about Tania's academic progress. However Amina and others could not recall Tania. Amina tried to recall Tania but speculated that perhaps her performance was below average in Maths and that was the reason she could not remember her. Amina stated: "I teach maths for both sections of grade 7 which is 180 students, and I can't remember her name". This single interaction shed light on teachers' lack of awareness of children with disabilities in their class. Later, Tania reported that her poor Maths performance was linked with reduced interest in the subject and difficulty gaining attention from teachers. She claimed that she was often overlooked by teachers in the Maths class, as she felt that teachers' attention was focussed on students in the first few rows.

This incident encouraged me to further discuss the school's assessment system in relation to children with disabilities. At the beginning of the discussion, Rashid outlined the existing assessment procedures and noted that examinations especially were a barrier for many students with disabilities. He reported that a prescribed evaluation criteria was a potential mismatch with the notion of inclusive education. According to Rashid, students with disabilities often failed to understand examination questions due to the ways in which questions were worded. He described the questioning system as follows: "There is a written test of 100 marks for every subject. Creative questions make up 60 marks while multiple choice questions provide opportunity for 40 marks." At this point, Gopal stated that students need to possess comprehension skills in order to respond to creative questions. In support of this observation, Amina described a grade 8 student, Tuhin, who had moderate intellectual disabilities who struggled to remember

subject information. Tuhin always scored poorly on examinations. Amina questioned the purpose of evaluating Tuhin in this was as he repeatedly failed to achieve satisfactory marks in social science and language subjects which required information retention. Ahmed also pointed out the weakness of examination system and said, “It’s true that students may have a particular interest in specific subject areas. Our system does insist on participation in every subject for children with disabilities. That may contribute to their underachievement.”

Parental involvement

According to the teachers, parents of students at Damayanti High School did not spend time interacting with teachers. Several teachers suggested that parents were a key source of barriers to their children’s education. They reported “lack of parental awareness”; “lack of educational care by family”; and “illiterate parents” as barriers for children with disabilities in secondary education. For example, one assistant teacher, Ahsan, said that most of the guardians of children with disabilities did not care about or were not aware of their disabled child’s potential in education. Amina and Ahsan also suggested that families’ poor economic situation could affect their understanding and involvement in their child’s education. Ahmed acknowledged the importance of parents’ involvement in students’ education, particularly when the student had a disability.

Further discussion of emergent themes

The interviews with school staff, parents and students at Damayanti High School highlighted various complex issues related to inclusive education in mainstream secondary schools in Bangladesh. These complexities provoke consideration of the grounded realities of inclusive education practices and demonstrate how practices contrast with government policies. The overreaching theme that emerges from of this case is the gap that exists between policy and practice. In addition to this over-arching theme, five supplementary themes emerged from the narratives and are presented below.

The definition of inclusive education

The discussions with staff at Damayanti High School highlighted the importance of defining inclusive education. Creating a clear and understandable definition of inclusive education was also highlighted by Kozleski, Yu, Satter, Francis and Haines

(2015). Teachers were unable to describe inclusive education. Several teachers perceived that inclusive education was disruptive to the classroom, with students with disabilities making teachers' tasks difficult and stressful. Black-Hawkins and Florian (2012) argued that many teachers report that the literature does not adequately address their professional concerns regarding the enacting of a policy of inclusion in their classrooms. Teachers' responses in the group interview showed that several teachers perceived inclusive education as imposing more responsibilities without returning any benefits. Thornton (2006) reported that teachers in Bangladesh non-government secondary schools feel undervalued, as they do not have opportunities to contribute to development of academic policies.

The case of Damayanti High School suggests that, without awareness of or direct support for inclusive education, the practice of inclusive education is often narrow in its application in that the mere presence of children with disabilities is put forward as evidence of inclusion. As explored in Chapter Two most researchers of inclusive education practices in Bangladesh have focused on exploring the constraints and limitations of practices as opposed to highlighting successful practices. For the staff of Damayanti High School, inclusive education was limited to the opening of the school door to children with disabilities, which was described as more inclusive than other nearby schools who did not enroll students with disabilities. The school included students with disabilities according to their commitment to the policy and termed their practices as inclusive. However, a recent study explored that only including children with disabilities without addressing their educational needs could be described as creating a "damping" state which is noted as the "worst form of integration" (Sanagi, 2016, p.212). Therefore the school's practice of enrolling students with disabilities while providing little in the way of resources or teaching support suggests they still have some progress to make towards achieving the notion of "genuine inclusion" which aims to ensure quality education for all (Lloyd, 2008).

Ambiguity in policy and "reasonable accommodation" of students' needs

This school case highlights several inherent weaknesses of the existing policy of inclusive education in Bangladesh. Teachers' reported no awareness of guidelines for practising inclusive education in secondary schools. As a result, practices varied greatly from teacher to teacher. Although the government policy advocates for "reasonable accommodation" for students with disabilities to address their learning needs in schools

(RPPDA, 2013; UN, 2006), a burning question remains as to how schools can achieve this. It appears that, currently, Damayanti High School has not changed practices to support students with disabilities. For example, there was no evidence that the school has made any changes in their regular activities to meet the needs of students with disabilities such as Tania. Her class was situated at the second floor, even though she had difficulties climbing stairs. More surprisingly, teachers showed no initiative to place Tania in a seat nearer to the front of the class to support her view of the board and engagement with the teacher.

The experiences of Tania also illustrated the weaknesses in the evaluation system for many children with disabilities. Her physical disabilities prevented her from achieving success in inflexible examinations for several subjects, including being unable to perform a physical exercise in the examination for the Physical Education and Health class. There was no evidence of adaptation to the curriculum for students with disabilities. In fact, there was no adequate alternative option of assessing academic progress for children with disabilities in any special circumstances, even though disabilities were limiting Tania in her practical examination. However, the school was following the standardised examination procedures according to the National curriculum documents; therefore, they had not attempted to change the system for Tania. In this case, it could be argued that the school should adopt specialised alternative assessment procedures for children with disabilities if they would like to embrace true inclusion. This would involve “empowering students to succeed and wrapping them with the support necessary to do so” (Abawi, 2015, p.47). An important question here is how the school’s assessment system can be adapted to support students with disabilities to celebrate progress. The recent evaluation indicators of inclusive education in New Zealand suggest that it is the responsibility of the school and its staff “to adapt to the needs of the student – rather than ‘fit’ the student to their school and class” (ERO, 2015, p.32).

Individualised education programmes: Teacher’s perspectives

Teachers were not aware of the benefits or processes involved in developing individualised education plans (IEP) for students with disabilities. Surprisingly, no teacher was clear about how IEPs work or how IEPs could be formulated. However, the individualised education plan is a significant component of inclusive education and has been mandated (for example, the US Public Law PL 94-142) for educating children

with disabilities in many countries. Due to not having any clear instructions about IEPs in Bangladesh policies, teachers were not setting any developmental targets for children with disabilities in the school. Williams-Diehm, Brandes, Chesnut and Haring (2014, p.4) explored the importance of IEP as an educational plan developed for students with disabilities. Pritchard (2006) also argued that a well organised IEP would provide support to minimise the discriminatory practices against children with disabilities and could ensure appropriate educational achievement of these particular groups of children. Prunty (2011) suggested that an IEP was a tool for implementing the rights of children with special needs in education, whereas Bruns and Thompson (2014) considered IEP as the foundation of instruction and interventions for students with disabilities. Sanches-Ferreira, Lopes-dos-Santos, Alves, Santos and Silveira-Maia (2013, p.507) described the importance of an IEP as a fundamental document that defined all educational responses including the additional support required for the learning and developmental experiences of children with disabilities. The importance of IEPs is clearly stated in the literature, and this school case suggests that they are an important consideration for Bangladesh inclusive education initiatives in mainstream secondary schools.

Parental involvement

Parents of students with disabilities at Damayanti High School did not engage with or support teachers at the school. This finding is based on teacher reports that most of the parents were unaware or not confident about the education of their disabled children. In contrast, parents' reported getting a minimum or no responses from teachers when they approached them for information. For example, Tania's father had moved from school to school and teacher to teacher seeking support for his daughter. This experience illustrates the challenges for parents and schools to create co-operative partnerships between educators and parents. Lamichhanea and Kawakatsub (2015) reported that children with disabilities and their families face difficulties accessing appropriate education. Therefore, it is essential for developing an inclusive school culture in Bangladesh to consider strategies and mechanisms that serve to strengthen relationships and cooperation between parents and school staff. In order for effective inclusive education to be established at the secondary level, parental presence and participation is likely to be needed. Hornby (2011) stated the importance of parental

involvement in children's education and the positive benefits for students' education when there is a positive connection between the home and school.

Teaching conditions

In contrast with the Bangladesh government's policy of inclusive education, data suggest that a deficit discourse is prevalent at Damayanti High School. Most of the teachers identified two broad areas that they considered as barriers to inclusive teaching and learning practices. These were insufficient resources (physical, human and monetary), and a lack of knowledge or belief about the abilities of students with disabilities. Teachers further highlighted the gap between the implicit expectations of policy statements and how resources were allocated and implemented. Teachers criticised the policies that emphasised including students with disabilities with a provision of increased resources by the government in support of the policies.

The challenges reported by teachers at the school were numerous. These challenges included class sizes and the physical classroom environment. The challenge of class size is consistent with reports from other countries in the region. In a recent Pakistan-based study Khan and Iqbal (2012) reported that effective teaching was not possible in overcrowded classes, with teachers facing problems in their management of students' engagement in learning. In a study of Indian secondary schools, Shah and Inamullah (2012) explored the consequences of large class sizes on students' learning. They reported that the class size had a direct impact on students' learning, with the quality of learning often hindered when a large number of students are packed into a relatively small room. Similarly teachers suggested that modifications were needed to the physical class environment to support teaching students with disabilities. Bangladesh policy acknowledges that an accessible school involves the provision of multiple physical features (BANBEIS, 2008). These include accessible entrances and doorways throughout the school, ramps in addition to stairways, spacious bathroom facilities, classroom seating, and accessible playground equipment. Damayanti High School did not have any of these physical features.

In addition to the physical characteristics limiting the school's ability to support students with disabilities, teachers reported that support and recognition of their role limited their ability to develop their practices to support students. Purcaru and Unianu (2015) explained that the challenges involved in including students with disabilities in

mainstream schools arise both at the structural and instructional levels. Therefore, reformations at several levels are critical for effectively implement of inclusive education. The data from the current school is consistent with Thornton's (2006) report that Bangladesh teachers' wages are a barrier to improving students' achievement. Teachers not employed under the MPO remuneration systems reported dissatisfaction and discrimination. The head teacher acknowledged this discrimination. This school case illustrates the challenge of supporting teachers with fair pay and fair hours of work and suggests this is necessary if they are to comply with the government policies and change their practices in order to provide inclusive classroom environments.

Concluding remarks

In contrast with many Bangladesh secondary schools, Damayanti High School had enrolled students with disabilities in their academic program. School staff highlighted this as an inclusive practice and adherence to inclusive education policies. However, data revealed that once students were enrolled there was no alteration to pedagogical or assessment practices for students with disabilities. The school appeared to be focused on achieving high academic standards as opposed to focusing on equitable access to educational activities for all students. The gap between policy and practice was apparent throughout the data gathered at the school. Although a *rights-based* approach is a foundation of the national policy framework for educating students with disability (MoE, 2010, RPPDA, 2013), educators in the school appeared to view disability from a *deficit-discourse* or *medical model* perspective. This implies that students with disabilities have inherent learning weaknesses and as such these students may be pushed to the periphery of learning environments. The findings of this chapter suggest that a major challenge for the school, as for others in Bangladesh, is to support school staff to shift their thinking towards a *rights-based* model for students with disability.

Chapter Eight

Trying to “Do Inclusion” without Knowing Students’ Needs: Issues of Identification of Disabilities in Megawati Adarsha High School

A major concern is knowing about types of disabilities and then taking steps to address the student’s learning needs.

(A teacher)

Introduction

This chapter presents the case of Megawati Adarsha High School which places a general focus on identification of disabilities and its relations to understanding the learning needs of children in an inclusive classroom. The case highlights issues arising when educators incorrectly identify or misunderstand a student’s disability and their associated learning needs. In an attempt to describe complex inclusive education practices, this chapter includes voices of students with disabilities and those of their parents and teachers. Messiou and Hope (2015) explored students' voices as a powerful means of developing inclusive practices in schools. They suggested a way of promoting inclusive education practices in schools was to engage with student voices. Similarly, Norwich and Kelly (2004) emphasised considering student voices in educational decision-making for ensuring greater inclusiveness in schools. The value of parent voices in inclusive education was reported by Fletcher (2016). Therefore this chapter weaves together these voices in order to illustrate the school’s inclusive education culture.

The case reflects the increasing presence of children with disabilities in the Bangladesh education system as a result of increasing societal awareness and understanding of disability. Although this school reported increased school attendance by children with disabilities, the overall percentage of children with disabilities is still lower than in national enrolment rates. However, a lack of and inconsistent understanding among teachers regarding disabilities appeared to create paradox of problems. Furthermore, these problems were augmented by an apparent lack of communication between school and parents. Teachers were confused by parents’ over-caring attitude of their children’s disabilities. The school was challenged in understanding and meeting the needs of children with disabilities.

Methods: Access and data sources

My visit to Megawati Adarsha High School was supported by a gatekeeper who was a local developmental activist, and also a student in the master of education (M.Ed) course at my University. I initially met with the head teacher, Ashraful, and also the president of the school management committee (SMC) Ayub Ali. During our initial discussion both appeared very conscious of the government policy focused on disabilities and education. This is discussed further within the chapter. Data was also collected by way of additional interviews conducted with the assistant head teacher, Rubina, and a group of teachers who had classes with students with disabilities. This group consisted of seven teachers (Fazlur, Halima, Kakuly, Hanifa, Aslam, Huda and Akbar). I had also made two participant observations of two grade 9 classes which included two students with disabilities. Both Mithila and Atiur were interviewed along with their parents. I also inspected the school records and observed the various facilities that the school provided that supported inclusion.

Introducing the school: Facilities and background

Megawati Adarsha High School is a non-government secondary school situated in a small township approximately 35 kms from Dhaka. The school was established during the mid-1980s as a result of growing demand for secondary education from the surrounding community. The local environment includes the river *Sitalakkha* and several famous Jute mills. Interestingly, this rural school has become the venue for all local festivals.

The school's administrative and academic management structure was a contrast with the previous three schools I visited. This non-government school conducts its academic activities in two shifts, namely *Morning* (7:30 am to 12:30 pm) and *Day* (12:30 pm to 5:30 pm). The morning shift is predominantly for girls whereas the day shift is for boys. Two assistant head teachers, also known as *school shift in-charge*, are assigned to manage day-to-day academic activities for their respective shifts. The head teacher is the administrative head of the school and responsible to the school managing committee (SMC) for his activities.

At the time of my visit, the school had 57 teachers (with only 20 enlisted with the MPO scheme) serving approximately 2500 students. Significantly more girls (65%) than boys (35%) were enrolled. School records showed that most teachers had an educational

degree. The head teacher started his professional career in 1970, serving in various institutions before joining Megawati Adarsha High School as head teacher in 2011.

The history of the school's establishment of this school is notable. Most of the inhabitants of the surrounding township consist of lower-middle socio-economic working families. Due to the long distances needed to travel to schools, local leaders and wealthy individuals discussed the need for a local school. As an increasing number industries were becoming established, increased migration saw a need for the establishment of a new secondary school. The school began its life in a rented house. Then wealthy locals provided donations of land and money for development of the school. These donations included one of 0.08 acres of land from a local person who also proposed naming the school after his late father who was also known for his generosity in the area. The community honoured the family and designated the school as proposed. After several years the school expanded further by purchasing another 50 decimal²⁸ land from its own development fund. The school achieved government recognition during the mid-1990's and received permission for students to participate in the SSC examinations in the following year. The school recently reached to the significant achievement of a 100% pass rate in the public examination.

The school's infrastructure includes access to sufficient drinking water, electricity and internet connection. The school consists of one five-storey building and four smaller single storey buildings making a total of 30 rooms including administrative offices, a teachers' lounge, a library, a computer lab and teaching rooms.

The philosophy of the school's management was one of accessibility and inclusion for all. The president of the School Managing Committee (SMC) was a local labour union leader who reported that everyone was encouraged to attend school, and that the school had never intentionally imposed barriers to admission for any student. Therefore the number of disabled students appeared comparatively higher than other schools in the region. Several children with disabilities attending Megawati Adarsha High School reported many positive experiences in their participation in school life.

²⁸ Decimal is used in Bangladesh as a unit of land area that is equal to approximately 0.01 acre or 40.46 m².

The Story of Mithila: Education ensures her identity is not disabled

This story of Mithila highlights how the love of family and community can overcome adversity. In many cases, society shuns families with a disabled child (Hosain, Atkinson & Underwood, 2002). This was the experience of Mithila's family. Mithila studied in grade 10 and experienced speech and intellectual difficulties. At the very beginning of our interview her mother demanded, "Who says my daughter is a disabled?" She continued, "You see! My daughter is a brilliant student. However, I don't like to have any special supports for her disability". This very simple question from Mithila's mother, Ayesa, raised three important issues relating to the inclusion of children with disabilities. Firstly, the social context may prevent the family from recognising their child's disabilities, and secondly, families may be fearful for the future for their child. Thirdly, the school may not provide relevant information on a student's disability and therefore not provide support for the family.

The interview with Mithila's mother took place during my visit to the school. After observing a class with Mithila, I asked the head teacher if he could arrange a meeting with her parents. Initially, Mithila's mother did not want to disclose or discuss her daughter's disability, even with teachers. I then respectfully explained my study aims and asked for her consent for an interview. After a short reflection she provided her consent. Soon after the interview started Ayesa described her story of struggle for support for Mithila's development, from birth. This included much *door knocking* without finding support. Now, Mithila has become the main focus of her life: how can she ensure Mithila experiences a good education and a meaningful life? Therefore, if anyone refers to her daughter as disabled, she becomes upset and angry. During the interview she apologised for her initial reaction to my interest in interviewing her about Mithila.

During our discussion Ayesa reported that most teachers were supportive of Mithila. However, this had taken time to develop. Early in Mithila's time at the school she was identified as disabled and treated as an underachiever. Ayesa reflected on her concerns about teachers' treatment of her daughter. She visited the school and requested staff not to treat her daughter differently. Towards the end of our interview, Ayesa expressed her anxiety and said that, although she understood her daughter's functional limitations, she was careful not to label her daughter in order to benefit her future. For example, she stated that if the people treated her as disabled, then she may not be able to marry in the

future. Then I asked her to expand her reasoning. Ayesa described that society was not likely to accept a disabled girl as a bride for an educated boy. She further illustrated the painful feedback that she received from the wider community: "Still our community is very rude, as I am blamed for Mithila's disabilities". She then asked rhetorically, "How could I make her life uncertain by labelling her." Ayesa's main expectation was that Mithila would receive education and this would enable her to become independent in the future.

After the interview finished, the head teacher arrived in the room. He reported that he was also a good friend of Mithila's family and asked me whether Ayesa displayed any resistance at the beginning of the interview. He reinforced that society was not ready to accept a disabled girl. It was clear that Ayesa struggled to establish rights for her daughter. This is consistent with the Tikel's experience at Basanti High School in Chapter 6.

Ayesa's responses about raising Mithila highlight existing societal knowledge and attitudes towards disabilities and the value of students' inclusion in education. A study conducted by the Centre for Services and Information on Disability (CSID, 2002) recognised that, although there is an increasing focus on disability issues in Bangladesh, attitudes are still influenced by ignorance, fear and superstition. As a result, persons with disabilities are considered inferior in all spheres of life including education. Another study in a single district of Bangladesh highlighted that persons with disabilities were denied access to formal services and experienced social exclusion and stigma (Foley & Chowdhury, 2007). These societal attitudes can, however, be potentially mitigated through personal determination and support from family as illustrated in the following case of Atiur.

The story of Atiur: Living with a physical disability

My family, especially my mum, is the source of all my inspiration. One day, she told me a story about Helen Keller who was a deaf-blind. Once one person asked Helen about missing the beauty of nature, Hellen replied that "one does not need eyes to appreciate the beauty of this world; the vision of the mind is adequate". This inspired me to achieve my potential and create an image within my mind that I can do things just like others.

Atiur was a grade 9 student with physical disabilities who demonstrated a high level of motivation and interest in education. This quote above was spoken gently by Atiur in

reply to a question regarding the source of his inspiration. Atiur's father reported that he contracted meningitis during early infancy leaving him unable to walk. Although he could not move like other children, he was determined to succeed at school. During our discussion, his father stated that their main responsibility was to support Atiru in realising his dream of a successful education. In response to a question regarding supports for Atiur, his father identified that teachers had limited understanding in supporting children with disabilities.

Atiur himself reported no disappointment or negative feelings about his disabilities. He reported that with his own determination and continued support from his family, he would realise his dreams. He thought that education was the key to achieving future independence. A further quote from Atiur demonstrated his determination: "I can't move without the help of others, but I aim to hold myself up before the world and that I am not a burden to anyone."

Atiur described both his determination to succeed and the influential role that school played in his life. Although his primary school was located next to his home, he had to travel a considerable distance to Megawati Adarsha High School. As a wheelchair user, this distance was a challenge. He recalled his first day at the school, when the head teacher expressed concern about his ability. Nevertheless, he was granted permission to sit the admission test. At this point, Atiur reported that he felt significant pressure. The test to secure his admission involved competing with thousands of children [non-disabled] of the same age. He achieved a pass mark and was enrolled in the school. Atiur reported the attention he soon attracted from his peers:

Though I was excited to attend the school on the first day, I was shocked when I entered. Everyone was watching me. I felt like an animal in the zoo in my wheelchair.

In contrast, he reported that his current experiences at school had changed significantly due to support from staff, "Now, I do not feel lost. I am integrated into the school community". Atiur also described an example of support received from the school when he found that his class was scheduled to be held on the third floor. He informed his father, who then discussed this with the head teacher who rescheduled the class to a ground floor room. At that time, there was no wheelchair ramp in the school.

Later during a discussion with the head teacher, he reported staff resistance to enrolling Atiur and that he himself was unsure how to support Atiur, being the first student with physical disabilities to enrol at the school. The head teacher, Ashraful, stated that some

teachers argued that they would not be able to manage Atiur in the classroom. And that students like Atiur could disrupt their class, leading to chaos in the school. Several teachers were reported to express their concern that Atiur could be the victim of bullying from other students. The head teacher perceived that most of his teaching staff were against including children with disabilities in the school. This staff resistance started to shift after a series of discussions with teachers and SMC members. An outcome of these discussions was the building of an initial temporary ramp for Atiur to access the ground floor classroom and then a more permanent structure after a period of several months.

A story of Manoshi: Self-determination can overcome difficulties in education

Manoshi was a grade 7 student who experienced visual impairment. An interview with her mother, Munmun, provided background information about Manoshi's transition from primary to Megawati Adarsha High School. Compared to the primary school, the high school had little in the way of resources to support Manoshi. Although teachers' attitudes towards her were negative to start, the attitude of staff had shifted over a period of time. During the interview she described a negative experience with her daughter on their way to the primary school. A local lawyer stopped them and asked where they were going. When he learned that she was taking her daughter to a school, he laughed and remarked that there was no value in education of a blind girl. A neighbour also told her: "Blind girls like her have no value in society", and suggested not to waste any resources on her education. However, Munmun's experiences had changed for the better with people in the wider community becoming more aware about the education of children with disabilities. I was interested in what factors Munmun perceived as influencing societal shifts in thinking about children with disabilities. She replied that awareness campaigns by the government through mass media supported positive change. At the same time, extended opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in schools also contributed to improved experiences. Manoshi herself reported placing the utmost importance on her study, and that her teachers were supportive. However, teachers did not have the knowledge or resources to support Manoshi using Braille.

Analysis of teachers' narratives and interview data

The above case stories indicate both the opportunities and challenges for the inclusion of students with a disability at Megawati Adarsha High School. The analysis of teachers' narratives and interview suggests four different perspectives towards students with disabilities. These are: i) teachers' perspectives of inclusion and children with disabilities; ii) the school staff perspectives on inclusive education for children with disabilities; and, iii) general challenges and perceived needs to be more inclusive. In order to illustrate the inclusive education at this school, I collated and synthesised teachers' narratives and interview data and created figure 13 to illustrate the aspirations, challenges and possible ways forward for the school.

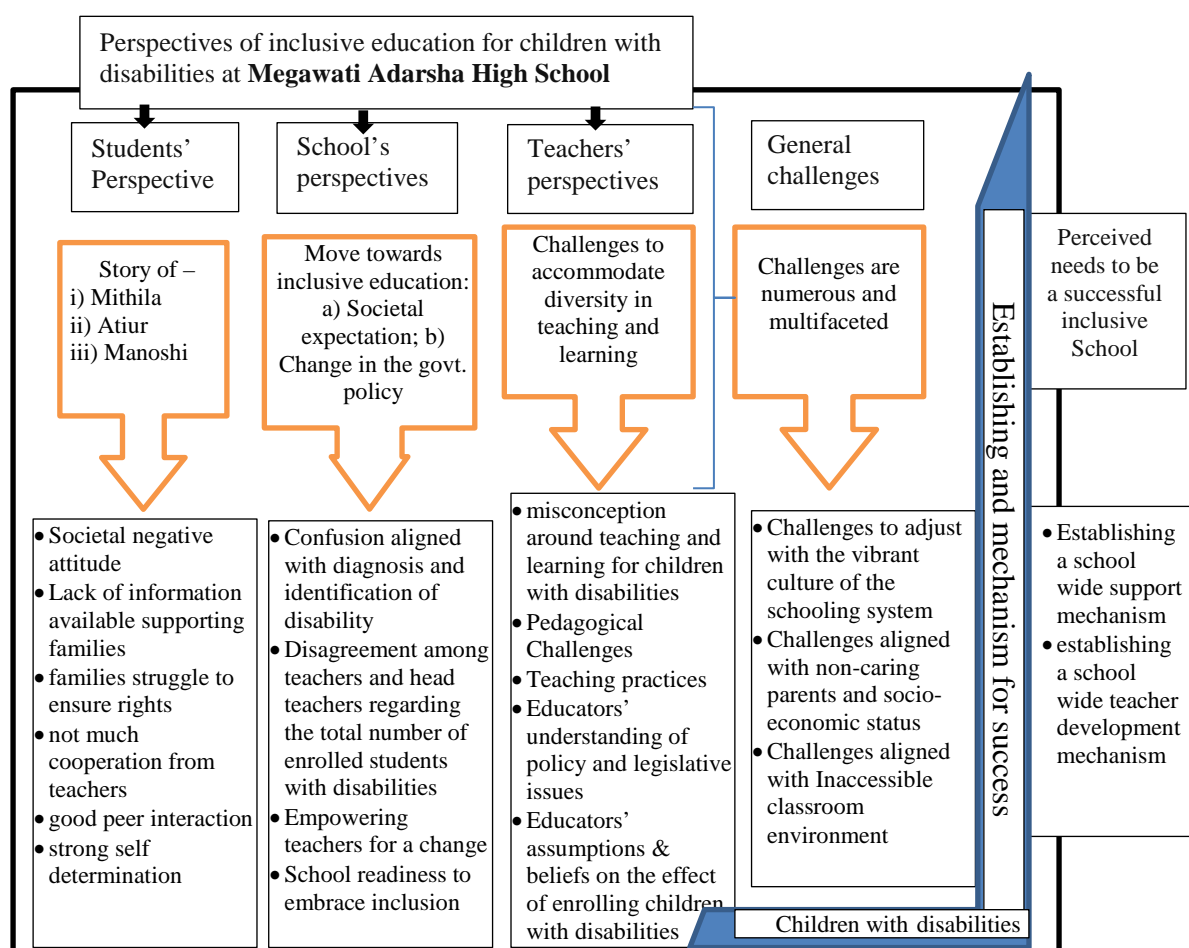


Figure 13. Inclusive education practices at Megawati Adarsha High School

School's perspectives of inclusive education for children with disabilities

An overarching theme that emerged from interviews with staff at Megawati Adarsha High School was one of confusion about the assessment and diagnosis of students with

disability. The analysis of interview data together with teachers' opinions suggests clustering staff perspectives on inclusive education and disabilities into four categories. These are: i) identifying students with disabilities; ii) different perspectives on the number of enrolled students with disabilities; iii) the empowerment teachers to implement inclusive education; and, iv) the school's position in terms of inclusion. These perspectives are discussed below.

Perspectives aligned with identifying students with disability

A focus of several discussions within interviews with staff was the assessment and identification of students with disability. The head teacher Ashraful reported that most staff misunderstood the concept of disability. To illustrate this he described the term *protibondhi* as follows:

Our society correlates the word *protibondhi* negatively with various *protibondhakata* [barriers/obstacles]. If a person is unable to overcome *protibondhakata*, then we call him/her disabled.

The cases of Atiur and Mithila highlighted that assessment was a significant barrier for inclusive education to take hold at *Megawati Ardarsha High School*. There were no standardised tools to support the screening and identification of both the learning strengths and the challenges that the students face. Several teachers in the group interview stated their need for training to accurately identify the learning needs of students with disability. Teachers' interview data revealed that observations and students' academic records were the primary tools that teachers had to identify a student with a disability. This assessment approach led to confusion regarding the needs of students with disabilities. For example, teachers' reported they did not know how to support Mithila, incorrectly assuming she had a mental problem. For example, Atiur told, "seeing her, I thought that she might have short of intelligence, therefore, I did not take any care of her at the beginning."

Despite the limited understanding among staff about the nature and degree of disabilities, the head teacher showed a positive attitude towards disabilities. He stated an assumption he had that most of the students might have some sort of disability – varying from very mild to severe. He said, "Our understanding of *disability* is probably limited by our experiences here and is likely more than that". In an attempt to clarify this, he presented an example of a grade 9 student called Mukti. Ashraful reported that

she achieved high levels of academic success with no apparent physical or sensory impairments. However he reported the student experienced a communication difficulty:

She has a problem speaking. On the other hand, this might be a limitation in her ability to express herself appropriately. For example, when she starts talking, she does not stop.

The head teacher's account was supported by a teacher, Akbar, who reported an incident involving Mukti:

I often avoid asking her questions, because once she starts to answer, nobody will get any opportunity to speak. She will say whatever is in her mind, whether or not it is relevant.

Similarly, another teacher Aslam, joined in the discussion and stated:

One day in the class, when I attempted to stop Mukti, she started to cry, and claimed I was being unfair. It seemed that she might have a thinking issue.

At this point, Arif added, "O! That girl! She cannot provide any short answer or answers with one or two words". The assistant head teacher restated that difficulty processing information expressed in some abnormal behaviour could be a disability, "We do not know the different types of disability, but we know when a disability might be present." In the group interview, several educators described how they judged whether a student has a disability. Kakuly said, "We assume a student has a disability when we see a difference in their thinking, behaviour, and other aspects of development compared to other students of a similar age." Fazlur reported that he could understand the physical or sensory disabilities that he saw. The staff then discussed that disability could have more than a physical or sensory basis. For example, Halima stated that children might have an intellectual disability which shows up in abnormal behaviour. She also reported students in her class being unable to respond to question in the class, or with difficulty reading or writing.

Differences in staff perception of the number of students with disabilities

This section describes how staff at Megawati Adarsha High School differed in terms of their perception of the number of students with disabilities. In our initial interview the head teacher stated there were 82 children with disabilities in the school. He said that he knew this as recently the Ministry of Education had asked him to prepare a list of students with different abilities. In contrast, during the group interview with teachers, the assistant head teacher, Rubina, stated the number of students with disabilities would

not be more than seven. I countered this with reference to information from the head teacher. Then Rubina replied that she could only recognise five students with disabilities enrolled in her afternoon shift and two more in the morning shift. She further explained that the students' disability was clearly documented for these students, and their disabilities were visible. Then Fazlur supported the head teacher's estimate, "Our head teacher has 42 years' experience. He often visits the classes and observes students. He thinks that some students might have learning and intellectual disabilities".

At the end of my school visit, I meet the head teacher once again, and I raised the issue about the disparity in number of students with disability. In an attempt to clarify his stated number, he showed me the confidential list of children he had prepared for the Ministry of Education. Although some disabilities were not visible, he asked each teacher to prepare a list of students who were likely to show behaviour that was different to general students. He further reported that there were some students with behavioural as well as learning problems. He whispered that the report was confidential and kept in a locked drawer, as some parents could react negatively if they knew their child's name was on the list. Then he said, "However, I have no proper measures for identifying disabilities. If we could identify the learning disabilities, it would be a big number". Finally, he admitted the difficulties they had with identifying students with disabilities and asked me, "How could we provide inclusive education without knowing much about our students' disabilities?"

During the group interview with teachers, in response to a query regarding such differences among teachers, a senior teacher, Aslam said, "We have neither expertise nor any measures to determine disability. We only depend on our eyes. That is why; we only could recognise the bodily disabilities or sensory impairments such as visual impairment, hearing impairment and physical disability". At this point, Halima, another teacher, said, "We may assume other disabilities, like learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, autism) but how could we be sure?"

The cross analysis of the teachers' interview data showed that the staff found it difficult to define disability, and were solely dependent on their experiences and observations to determine if children had a disability. As a result there were variable estimates among staff of the number of students with disabilities. The group interview data suggested that teachers had constructed disability as a deficit from normal appearance or behaviour. Huda described this perception as, "Some disability we may understand by seeing the person, but some not". Another teacher, Aslam, reported that while they

could understand physical disabilities or sensory impairments, identifying students with learning or intellectual disabilities was difficult.

The empowerment of teachers to implement inclusive education

The President of the SMC, Ayub Ali stated, “Empowering teachers to think *outside the box* led the school to raise its standard.” He affirmed that the empowerment of teachers was a key strategy implemented at Megawati Adarsha High School. The aim of this and other strategies was to become recognised as one of the best performing schools in national examination results. Ayub Ali described the changes he brought after he was elected head of the SMC. For example, he reported that he had examined the school culture and found that teachers had no mechanism or ability to express their ideas or concerns. “I emphasised the need for continuous dialogue with staff,” he said. “As a result, the teaching staff, led by the head teacher began to reflect on how to raise student achievement”. He further stated that the key challenge was to encourage teachers to do their best. Then he added, “I insisted teachers develop their reflective thinking skills by visiting and observing other schools”. According to Ayub Ali, these initiatives helped teachers improve their pedagogical skills and their ability to focus on individual learners.

The head teacher corroborated the head of the SMC’s statements: “Since his election, the head of the SMC has encouraged regular meetings with teachers to discuss issues related to students’ progress. We also provided a special focus on the disabled learner, because a number of them were struggling with their studies.” Regarding the agendas of the meetings, the head teacher said that academic as well as administrative issues were prioritised. Teachers could contribute their ideas to share with others and that discussions were usually open. As a result, many new ideas were generated and teachers' motivation and enthusiasm increased. The head teacher stated: "Such a culture of collaboration has brought a change in school practices”.

In the group interview with teachers, most of the participants agreed on the effectiveness of these teacher meetings. The assistant head teacher said that it created opportunities for teachers to gain new ideas. Halima said that such meetings created a platform for teachers to share experiences, and also provided a supportive environment for discussion about limitations. Huda said that it was an ongoing opportunity to gather feedback from his colleagues. Fazlur stated that these academic discussions had created

an opportunity for them to learn from others, and it had strengthened their feelings of being part of a team.

The school's position on inclusive education

The teachers' narrative and other interview data indicated that school staff were aware of inclusive education but were not yet ready to embrace it. I observed a mixture of beliefs and practices in terms of inclusion of children with disabilities. The head teacher and managing committee were reporting their move towards inclusive education, while several teachers thought that they are not ready to teach children with disabilities in their mainstream classrooms. In response to a question about the position of the school in terms of inclusion and quality education, the head teacher responded that the school was moving towards inclusion. He perceived a transformative process was needed to comply with changing societal values and beliefs regarding persons with disabilities. He said, "We have to respond to the demands of society." He further stated the school's position: "I think that we should cooperate with the government in implementing their inclusive education policy. Schools are not situated outside of society, but part and parcel of society. Therefore, we must value societal expectation." The head teacher also reported the influence of government initiatives on the school's practices.

The Bangladesh government initiatives to increase the number of students with disabilities participating in the school have been underway for several years. Ashraful said that the school was obliged to align its practices with government policies on inclusion. He reported benefits such as that the government was providing textbooks to all students, and was also offering Braille versions of books free of charge for blind students. In addition, the design and graphic quality of textbooks had improved, as most textbooks were now printed in four colours. The head teacher suggested that the use of colourful books in class was increasing students' (including students with disabilities) interest in subjects. Ashraful added that government provision of scholarships for disabled students to continue studies at secondary level further supported inclusion at Megawati Adarsha High School. Teachers on the other hand reported a contrasting view of the school's support for students with disabilities.

Teachers reported that Megawati Adarsha High School's admission process was restrictive for students with disabilities. During the group interview with teachers, Fazlur suggested that the school was more focused on quality and fame rather than inclusion. He said, "In practice, the community would like to see our school improving

every year in terms of getting more students achieving A+s in public exams such as the JSC and SSC. Therefore we are consciously more concerned about maintaining our track record.”

Another teacher, Halima, said, “Look, we have about 2500 students, and our school is undoubtedly recognised as one of the best schools in the district. After primary school, every parent tries to enrol their children in our school. But we do have limitations. That’s why we have a competitive admission test. We select the best students to enrol in our school.”

Hanifa added, “Competing with the best students cannot be easy for a disabled child.” The assistant head teacher said, “Despite the admission policies, we do consider students with disabilities for admission.”

The head teacher reported that the issue of education of children with disabilities was discussed in a variety of within-school and external education networks. Teachers, in the group interview, were agreed with head teacher that inclusive education would be the best options for those disabled students who could successfully complete their primary education. At this point the assistant head teacher said, “But our school would not be an ideal place for them. We don’t have time to take care of every student in the classroom.” Explaining the reasons she again said, “There is heavy pressure on teachers.”

Another teacher, Kakuly, said, “But we do assume, and it’s the reality that parents of our students are very conscious about their children’s achievement. Therefore, they should take care of them.”

Aslam said, “Almost every student has a private tutor, or receives extra coaching. This helps to keep their exam results high.”

I then asked about their responsibility in class. Aslam replied, “We just provide guidelines for students. We take steps to make them aware what are the important topics they need to master to get a good grade in the exam. We instruct them what they need to do or learn, but not instruct them how they might learn.” From the discussions with teachers, it was apparent that a majority of teaching and learning activities were focused on supporting students’ examination success.

General challenges and perceived needs to be more inclusive

Megawati Adarsha High School faced a number of challenges in order to provide a more inclusive educational environment and experiences for students with disabilities.

These challenges varied from teachers' day-to-day classroom practices to staff perceptions about the benefits of inclusive education. The cross analyses of interview data identified overarching themes described three areas of challenges and two areas of perceived needs. The challenges were: i) the existing culture of the country's education system; ii) the school's physical environment including the accessibility of classrooms; and, iii) parent factors such as attitudes and socio-economic status. Analysis of teachers' statements reflected the need for the school to establish: i) school wide support mechanisms; and ii) a professional development programme for teachers. These challenges and perceived needs are described in the following sections.

The existing culture of Bangladesh's education system

Teachers' accounts suggest a disconnect or clash between the culture of Bangladesh's education system and the provision of inclusive education. For example, the main focus of schools is to raise the academic achievement of students, based on examination results. This approach is not well aligned with the philosophy of inclusive education. Teachers at the school appeared to focus on examination success of students rather than consider the broader notions of providing access and equity to support all students' learning.

The assistant head teacher, Rubina, identified the existing culture of the school system in Bangladesh as a major obstacle to progress towards inclusive education. She claimed: "Focusing on exam results does not support students' from learning for life". While explaining the culture of school system, she stated,

School attendances, supported by after-school coaching and private tuition are features of our education system. Public examinations create a focus on results as opposed to real learning. As a result, we are creating examinees rather students, an exam-based generation, rather than a learning community.

Then Rubina claimed that the school's education ideology should receive more attention. However pressure from parents was also driving the demand for private coaching or tuition. The focus on *raising standards* was making the task of teachers harder to provide inclusive classrooms.

Kakuly added that teachers had no choice but to target students' success in exams. Describing her personal position, she reported that,

As a teacher, I think a lot about it. I believe that the public examinations are a source of excessive tension between teachers and parents. This includes unhealthy competition with parents trying to ensure their child is at the top. Combined with the expectations of achievement for students was the increasing number of students. Halima reported that the school's stated teacher-student ratio (1:30) was unrealisable. Each class included additional students with most classes showing a ratio of about 1:60. This placed unrealistic demands on teachers and meant they were unable to provide individual support to students, including students with disabilities. At this point, Huda reported that teachers' wages were insufficient to support their families. As a result, teachers took on individual coaching to increase their income. Huda described that teachers were so busy providing coaching that their effectiveness in the classroom was reduced, which in turn induced more parents to seek individual tuition for their children. Other teachers expressed their understanding that this scenario was very common in most secondary schools in Bangladesh, and that this presented a significant obstacle to embracing inclusive education. At this point, Aslam referred to the Huda's previous comment regarding the low wages that teachers received and stated that this had a negative effect on teachers' desire to do the extra work needed to better support their disabled students.

The school's physical environment including the accessibility of classrooms

Most teachers reported that the school was inaccessible for students with physical disabilities in particular. In the group interview, Fazlur reported that a lack of disability-friendly classroom environments and appropriate tools prevented the supporting of students with disabilities. The school environment, including inaccessible toilet facilities, was identified as hampering education especially for girls with disabilities. Halima raised a fundamental question about the school's policies in that she was not aware of a disability-specific policy or plan consistent with a majority of schools in the country.

At this point, Kakuly asked how staff were supposed to know about the provision of accessible facilities without a policy. Teachers then discussed the need for a disability-friendly physical infrastructure to facilitate learning of children with disabilities. Strange and Banning (2015) illustrate the importance of the physical layout, design, and spaces of educational institutions for students' learning and development to occur. Therefore, the campus conditions are seen as crucial for creating an inclusive

environment. However, the physical infrastructure of Megawati Adarsha High School is not accessible or supportive for many students with disabilities. The assistant head teacher Rubina informed that they could not assign any classes beyond the ground floor for students with physical disabilities, because of not having accessible stairs or lift in the five storey academic building.

Parent attitudes and socio-economic status

Discussing the challenges to inclusive education, the head teacher commented that supporting students with disabilities was more difficult when their parents did not appear to care about their child's participation at school. For example, he said,

Even though we organise Mothers' Day celebrations, parent-teacher meetings, most of the parents are illiterate and do not take good care for their disabled children at home, so it is hard to improve the learning competency of those disabled students only by classroom teaching.

Ashraful also focused on families' socio-economic status as a challenge to supporting students with disabilities. Although he recognised the importance of building relationships with students' parents, he reported little engagement from parents. The demography of the school community indicated that most students were from families who experienced lower socioeconomic status. The head teacher suggested that families often overlooked the educational needs of children with disabilities. At this point, the president of the SMC stated, "When parents themselves have very little education, the pressure on schools increases. Because of their limited educational understanding, they cannot properly care for their children. This problem is intensified if the child has a disability."

The need for school wide support mechanisms

In the group interview, teachers were asked to reflect on their perceived needs and how these might inform the discussion about supporting the education rights of children with disabilities. A number of interesting suggestions were made. The assistant head teacher suggested a school-based special educator to support students with disabilities and their teachers. Halima stated that transportation was an accessibility barrier for children with disabilities. Thus she recommended that the school initiate a transportation support system for children with disabilities through the provision of a subsidy to offset the cost of transport.

Several teachers stated that they seek to get support, but it was not being provided to them for creating and teaching in an inclusive classroom. They suggested there was need for support from an inclusive education professional to deal with children with intellectual disabilities and a need for specialised teaching aids especially for children with vision impairments. The teachers also suggested that a teaching assistant in classes with two or more children with disabilities could help. Halima stated, “In my class, I rarely get a chance to help my disabled children because I have to deal with about 80 students within 45 minutes. I wish, if I had a teaching assistant, I could provide better teaching.” The assistant head teacher then declared that they would not be able to meet the learning needs of children with disabilities if the education authorities do not take any action for ensuring necessary supports, more importantly, providing opportunities to upgrade their skills through training.

The need for professional development for teachers

In response to a question about what could be done to support effective inclusive education at the school, most teachers emphasised the need for a professional development programme. The teachers also asked for time and space to learn basic skills needed for teaching in an inclusive classroom. Halima said, “Only training is not enough, we also need to be provided with a space to implement our knowledge and skills to ensure our practice improves.” Another teacher, Huda, stated the importance of supporting school administrator’s understanding of the issue and said, “The school administrators also need to have sufficient knowledge to supporting us teachers.” Several recent studies show that training is not enough unless there is support to implement training back at school. Engelbrecht et al. (2015) argued that training should be contextualised otherwise teachers’ would not be able to apply their learning in their classroom. Therefore, creating favourable conditions in schools to implementing the ideas and strategies teachers acquired through various training is seen important by Nawab (2017). He conducted a case study research in a rural Pakistani school to examine how teachers’ training was implemented at the school context. He found that teachers’ could not utilise most skills and strategies they gained from their in-service training because of non-supportive school context. Moreover, he noticed that cultural and structural barriers also limited teachers implementing training outcomes at school level.

Further discussion of emergent themes

During my visit to Megawati Adarsha High School, an overriding theme that became apparent was the challenges experienced by teachers in identifying students with disabilities. These challenges left teachers feeling somewhat helpless in supporting students. Contributing to this was the head teacher's retention of information about students' abilities and not sharing this with teachers. This may have contributed to a lack of common understanding and awareness of students' needs and possible strategies that could support students. These discussions helped my understanding of the issues related to inclusive education practices at the school.

Four subthemes emerged from the interview data that were linked to the overarching theme. These were societal attitudes towards disabilities, inclusive pedagogy and individualised teaching, teachers' limited understanding of students' disabilities and learning needs; and contextual challenges and adjustment to support the inclusion of children with disabilities.

Mackelprang and Salsgiver (2016) explored that understanding of personal disability-related views is critical in determining intervention types and approaches for the best development of students with disabilities. At Megawati Adarsha High School most of the teachers were dependent on their own knowledge and skills to identify students with disabilities. Without access to standardised assessment, teachers utilised students' academic records and class observations of students as the primary tools to take a decision about students' disabilities and related learning needs. The level of confusion about diagnosis and identification reflected a level of uncertainty within the school regarding meeting the needs of students.

Furthermore, the hide and seek attitudes with the total number of students with disabilities indicate the vulnerability of teachers in terms of their understanding of what constitutes disabilities. It further indicates the pressure on the school, and the head teacher to comply with a checklist audit. It seems the head teacher wanted to impress authorities with a high number. However, teachers assumed that the total number of students with disabilities would be higher than expected if they had the skills and knowledge to better assess students' abilities. Due to the high prevalence of learning disabilities in any school population, Gebhardt, Krammer, Schwab, Rossmann, Klicpera and Klatten, (2013) acknowledged that "every school system has to deal with children with Learning Disabilities (LD)" (p.160). As a large group of school

population has difficulties in learning, the needs of students with learning disabilities should be systematically addressed in the school to support their development and integration into the community and society (Gonen & Grinberg, 2016). To diagnose learning disabilities in students, Gebhardt et al. (2013) explored that getting expert opinions provided by special education teachers was important for Austria's schools alongside the standardised testing. A key question for Bangladesh schools that who will provide these expert opinions, as there is not yet any developed any support mechanism to diagnose students' learning difficulties.

Teachers' narratives and individual stories of students revealed that teachers generally misunderstood the term disability and held negatively constructed images of students' learning potential. The case showed that teachers were in a difficult situation to understand students' unusual behaviour, and often overstated students' behaviours (i.e., not responding in the class, talking too much in the class, committing errors in writing) as disabilities. Making incorrect judgements about students' disability reflects on their teaching practice. They appeared to focus more on students' limitations as opposed to strengths of students. Most of the teachers acknowledged their limitations in identifying and diagnosing disability. Elbeheri, Reid and Everatt (2015) argued that an assessment needs to gather information and incorporate aspects relating to the curriculum and classroom practices. Teachers' inability of assessing students in the school may lead towards exclusionary practices for many students with special education needs.

Conclusion

An analysis of the individual stories as presented in this case indicates that teachers' limited understanding of disability and inclusion are sources of challenges. As a result, a state of inequality in terms of teaching and learning is perceived in this school. The disparities have arisen due to the lack of expectation and different attitudes of teachers. The classroom teachers exhibited a lack of interest in providing more attention for students with disabilities, as they conceptualised the presence of these students as a burden. On the other hand, the stories of Atiur, Manoshi, Mukti and Shimu suggested that their teachers had minimum expectation of these students' education participation and achievement. Though they were in the inclusive setting, their experiences were not confidence-building. However, Johnson and Busby (2015) claimed that inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms is needed to rectify the inequalities

in schools. A lack of logistical support and low expectations appeared to negatively influence these students' quality of education.

Nevertheless this chapter presents the grounded realities of implementing inclusive education for a mainstream secondary school in Bangladesh. Teachers' revealed that numerous challenges exist on the road to inclusion. In this regards, Ahmmed and Mullick (2014) suggest that for inclusive education to succeed in Bangladesh, there is need to address the many challenges in transforming inclusive education reform policies into classroom-level practices.

Chapter Nine

Striving for Equity When the Door is closed: Ttajasbita School and College

It is important for me to understand the fears, ambitions and aspirations of my staff. Thus, sometimes, I put myself in their position... I use the magic word 'we' instead of 'I' to motivate them in teaching. (Principal)

Introduction

This chapter presents the final school case of Ttajasbita School and College. The school demonstrated how inclusion has taken place within an education system that is dominated by formal examinations. Entry to the school is based on results of entry testing which children with disabilities also have to complete. Despite this apparent barrier to school admission, the practices in the school appeared to create equal opportunities for every student to be successful. In a sense, school initiatives appeared to make inclusion happen. That is the essence of this chapter: striving for equity when the door is closed.

Ttajasbita School and College's policies recognised the rights of children with disabilities to be educated alongside their peers in inclusive classrooms. To this end the school complies with the Ministry of Education's policy (MoE, 2010) of educating children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The Principal reported a transparent admissions process based on merit. Because it has a limited number of available spaces for new students, the school typically refused entry for a large number of young people.

This school was of particular interest for this study as it had been recognised as one of the best performing secondary schools in national public examination results. The school had introduced many innovative practices in order to achieve their high examination performance. This particular case shows how the school moved forward with the help of technology to ensure equity in teaching-learning practices. Moreover, the case indicates that the school leadership and a qualified teaching staff have a greater influence than physical location. Collaborative stakeholder relationships, including input from parents, appeared to support student participation and performances.

Methods: Access, data sources and presentation

In order to access the school, I identified a local influential person who was a relative of one of my students. I met with the gatekeeper who then introduced me to the school Principal, Atiqur. To gather data from this school, I interviewed the Principal, Teacher-in-Charge, Anwar, and consulted with a member of the Governing Body (Alam - a parent representative). I also visited classes and observed several students with disabilities and the school's facilities. I also conducted an interview with a group of teachers. This group included the Teacher-in-Charge, and six teachers, Arosi (F), Abul (M), Anjan (M), Awlad (M), Ruma (F) and Asifa (F). I also talked with parents of students with disabilities and had several informal discussions with students with and without disabilities.

My report of the practices of this school differs from the earlier cases in that there are no illustrative student stories, and fewer discussions are directly reported. In large part this is the result of the way I was received in the school. I was made very welcome, shown a wide range of relevant documents and resources and thoroughly briefed by the principal and other key staff. Groups were set up for focus interviews but the timing for these was restricted. I left the school feeling saturated by information about its policies and practices, but reflecting that I had seldom been left alone to observe spontaneously or to talk spontaneously to students or teachers. When I looked back on my experience, I reflected that this approach was in some ways typical of the school's management, which was both very efficient and very directive.

Introducing the school: Facilities and background

Ttajasbita School and College is a non-government co-education secondary school located in a semi-urban area near the capital city of Dhaka. The school is surrounded by rice fields on three sides and a small road at the front. The school buildings include four multi-storeyed buildings with 103 classrooms. A new nine-storey building was under construction during my visit. The buildings housed approximately 10,000 students, 225 teachers and 47 supporting staff. Among the 225 teachers, only 60 were enlisted with the government's MPO system.

During my visit to this school, Alam, who was a parent representative on the school's governing body, described the history of the school. The school was established on the site of an abandoned poultry farm in 1989. Local community members had approached

the poultry farmer to seek his support for the school. In response the farmer donated the land for the school. A kindergarten was first established with 25 students. The school developed into a junior school (up to Grade 8) with 125 students in 1993. Two years later in 1995 the school was authorised to enrol students in grade 9. Students first appeared in SSC examination in 1997 with 24 out of 26 examinees successfully passing the examination. The school then set a goal of becoming number one in Bangladesh in terms of SSC examination results. In fact, the inclusion of all students got importance from the very beginning of the school. The teachers were pushed to play a critical role in creating an academic atmosphere in which all students were provided the best opportunities to succeed in public examinations.

The early success of the school saw the local community ask the school to open a college section (Grade 11 & 12). This was partly due to there being no higher secondary school for girls in the nearby areas. In response, the school began the college section in 2003. In the first ever HSC examination, the school obtained third position on the merit list among all colleges in Bangladesh. In recent years the school has achieved the highest ranking in national SSC results, leading to the school's name becoming known around the country. Although the school had no special arrangements for children with disabilities, they reported that they worked to ensure that children with disabilities could participate in all of their school activities. In fact, it was reported that the school had an overall positive approach to including and teaching children with disabilities. In a real sense, they were on the way to inclusion aligning with the policies of Bangladesh.

The school's vision and strategic management

The leadership and staff at Ttajasbita School and College reported the success of the school was partly due to having a long-term vision. This was described by the Principal as,

We have progressed because our vision combines the efforts of parents and school staff. Location doesn't matter, strong leadership and qualified teachers make the difference. And when parents understand the needs of their children, the school's task becomes easier.

Characterising the school practices, the Principal reported a secret of their success was the hard work and innovative learning-friendly initiatives that connected students with their interests. Alam also reported that they were determined to provide an environment where young learners could develop their latent talents and become inquisitive,

thoughtful, dynamic, optimistic and self-confident. The Principal also referred to the school's strategic direction, "We follow our mission. Our vision is very clear, and encourages all of us to dream". The dream of the school was to reach the highest peak of success and achieve the recognition of the best school and college in the country by awakening the latent talents of students.

The mission of the school was sufficiently robust to ensure a favourable environment for teaching and learning so that students could achieve good grades in the examination. Therefore, the school maintained a well-disciplined and routine-based system for students to comply with. The school values the mutual cooperation among teachers, students and parents or caregivers. Such cooperation provides the basis for the philosophy of inclusiveness. In contrast, teachers' narratives and the school's records reflect a significant focus on academic achievement through regular assessments; they conduct class tests, weekly quizzes, monthly model tests, semester tests, promotion test, as well as pre-examination tests. However the school also provided specific attention to perceived weaker students. The Principal claimed that it was part of their approach to inclusiveness. Similarly, the school was committed to reducing and eliminating student drop-out and to organise co-curricular activities to increase students' enjoyment of learning. The school also had a policy regarding home visits and a web-based Edu-smart system to communicate information to parents.

The Principal also reminded me about the general culture of Bangladesh secondary schools when highlighting aspects of his school's culture. For example, although most Bangladeshi secondary schools do not have clear written visions and missions, this school was determined to go forward with their vision and mission. The Principal stated that having a school vision gave them a clear understanding of what they needed to do or what they needed to change and that the vision prevented them from drifting aimlessly by providing direction.

School practices

The data received from interviews, observations and school records, supported the creation of Figure 14.

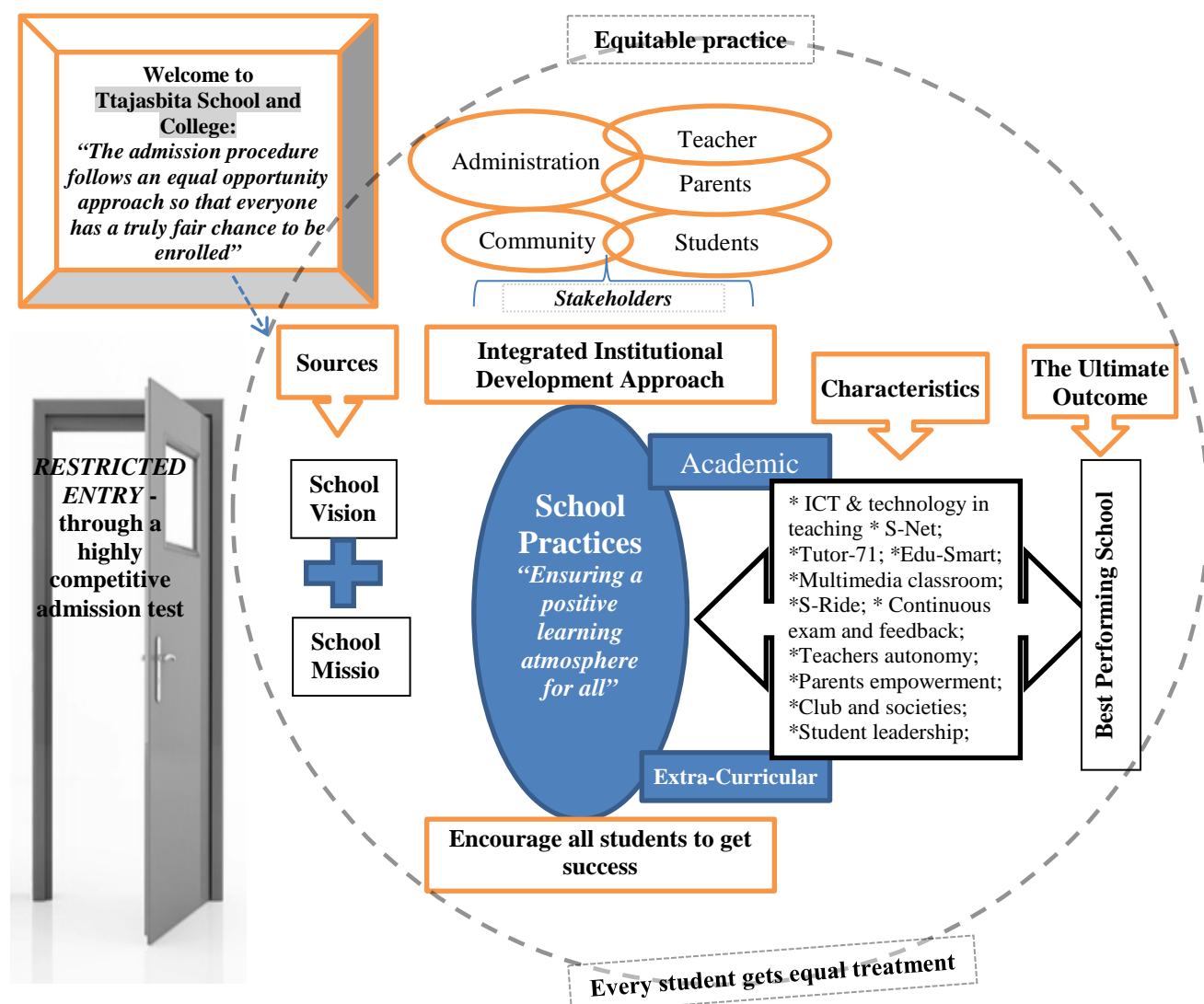


Figure 14. Conceptualisation of school practices for Ttajasbita School and College

This figure conceptualises the links between school practices and the school's vision and mission. The five components of the integrated institutional development for that school were working closely together and comprised school administration including governing body, local community, parents, teachers and students. Both academic and extracurricular activities were viewed as important for students' latent talents to emerge. Innovation and pragmatism were at the centre of these practices. Both the vision and practices aligned towards achieving the goal of becoming the best performing school in the country.

There is potential for strong criticism to be directed at the school for focussing practices on examination success. However, the interview data revealed that preparing the students for the examination was highly valued by all members of the school community and potentially supported students with disabilities. As reported by a teacher, Abul, who stated "due to our focus on the examination, we individually track every student, and we also take special programmes for slow or weaker students". This was corroborated by Awlad, another teacher, who said, "every school term, my focus is on Anik who is a student with intellectual disability who has difficulty remembering facts. Because of the exam focus, I wouldn't like to let him go without learning". The Teacher-in-Charge added, "Usually our teachers provide more attention to weak and disadvantaged students so that they can understand the patterns of exam and also can stay in the school system".

School practices to evaluate teachers' performance

The quality of teaching is a significant influence on student success (Jimerson & Haddock, 2015). This suggests the importance of internal processes designed to develop their performance (Hult & Edström, 2016). Ttajasbita School and College was in the process of developing an internal evaluation system designed to monitor and support teacher development. The Principal described the aims of the system as increasing teachers' awareness of their weakness, strengths and areas for development. The system was focussed on measuring a teacher's performance based on student achievement, a self-evaluation checklist and Principal evaluation. However, a systematic teacher evaluation system has not yet been developed in Bangladesh. The Principal acknowledged that their evaluation system was not scientific, but at least they had a strategy. He further reported that they had recently introduced a tool to evaluate their teachers. It was in a piloting-phase, and he was satisfied with the results they achieved. Then he intimated at a limitation of such strategy, "Due to social barriers or sensitivity of teachers I have not published the results on individual teacher's evaluation". A future addition to the evaluation system is inclusion of student feedback on teacher performance. Such an evaluation system likely adds to the administrative workload of school staff.

Administrative practices of the school

The school's administrative and leadership practices appeared to support development of an inclusive school environment. Ainscow and Sandill (2010) emphasised the importance of school leadership in developing and fostering inclusive values in order to create an inclusive school. Teachers' accounts and interview data revealed a strong leadership practice in this school that was supportive of increasing inclusive education practices. The school appeared to practice a form of distributed leadership with teachers empowered to make decisions with minimal oversight.

The school's administration and leadership structure included a governing body consisting of ten members. This committee is the highest decision-making authority who prepare and review the school's policies, make decisions about recruitment and oversee financial matters. The Principal manages the day-to-day administration without interference from the governance committee. However, the Principal is solely responsible to the committee for his activities. The school has two Assistant Principals who are responsible for managing the academic activities of both morning and day shifts. Besides, the school has four Teacher-in-Charge positions (i.e., College in-charge; Day Shift In-charge; Morning Shift In-Charge; English Version In-Charge) designed to support academic activities. They work in close collaboration with Assistant Principals under the guidance of the Principal. The school also has a separate examination department. The school also has a position titled Chief Information Officer who is responsible for providing information to anyone who requests it.

The Principal also reported a number of school rules in place to support the school's function. During the admission process, parents and guardians must sign a declaration form that their child will adhere to the school rules. The Principal firmly stated that they did not make any compromises on discipline issues, as students were expected to follow the rules and regulations. School attendance was a fundamental rule for students who were required to be at school 15 minutes before class starting times. At the end of classes students must return home promptly. Students are also required to wear the school uniform and keep an identity card with them in class. Personal hygiene must be maintained, for example nails should be trimmed, and nail polish is banned. Girls must wear head scarfs and students are discouraged from wearing jewellery, or carrying a mobile phone. Unexplained absenteeism attracts a fine of TK- 100 and parental explanation. Attendance of 95 percent is obligatory for each student to be promoted to

the next grade. Another important instruction to teachers and students is to support students with disabilities. Due to such strict administrative practices, during my visit I observed that students with disabilities appeared comfortable, and they did not report being bullied at school.

Including all students in a community of learning

Mitchell (2014) argued the importance of creating an atmosphere in which all students could participate and learn. In this regard, he emphasised the availability of supports for students to be engaged with learning. Teachers' accounts and interview data showed that this school had initiated a number of strategies designed to support students' inclusion in a community of learning. Though these strategies may not specifically focus on inclusion of children with disabilities, they may increase their access to education. Both academic support and non-academic support strategies were provided to support students. The main goal of academic support was to enhance the possibility of students of achieving examination success. In contrast, the non-academic support deals with the development of students' potentials. These supports are discussed below.

Academic support for all students' inclusion

It was evident from teachers' reports that the school had introduced many innovative practices to ensure access to an inclusive quality education for all students. In this regard, the Principal reported that their vision was to build up young learners as desirable citizens who could compete effectively in the nation development process with progressive knowledge, technology and morality. The practices appeared to support implementing inclusive education policies with possibilities to be replicated in other schools. During the professional conversations with the Principal, he claimed that practices such as the multimedia classroom were aligned with inclusive education and could enrich students' opportunity to receive a quality education. These were School Nuclear Education Team (SNET), Tutor-71 (Academic support to students in 24/7), support for students who are struggling to work at expected levels, and technology-based teaching. Although the above initiatives were not intended to support or introduce inclusive education, they appeared to become mechanisms to support inclusive practices.

The school nuclear education team: A key to success

At the very beginning of the initial interview, the Principal mentioned the School Nuclear Education Team (SNET) programme. SNET was introduced with the aim of ensuring the success of every student enrolled at Ttajasbita School and College. The main motto of SNET is to make the students inquisitive, active and studious. In this programme, a group of about 15 to 20 students (across the grades) remain under close supervision of a particular teacher. The teacher categorises students within his/her group into three sub-groups on the basis of the student's ability and termed these three subgroups as 'good', 'medium' and 'poor/ weaker'. The teacher is then required to submit the list of students to the Principal. Similarly, all assigned teachers are required to submit regular reports to the Principal on their respective student groups. The SNET programme aims to move students in the 'weaker' group to the 'medium' group, and the 'medium' group to the 'good' group by the end of the school year.

The SNET process involves *nuclear* teachers assessing each individual student and identifying the areas of support that a learning programme could target. The teacher regularly monitors the students in his/her group and provides ongoing feedback. If any area of weakness is identified, he immediately contacts the appropriate class or subject teacher. Then they collaboratively develop a plan to improve the student's learning. Individual planning is also prepared for students under the SNET programme. The Principal described the SNET programme as a continuous integrated supervision of students' learning and progress.

The inspiration for the SNET programme came after the Principal took part in an educational visit to South Korea. He reported observing South Korean secondary schools with classes of approximately 25 students, and with teachers who demonstrated caring approaches to students and their learning. The Principal also reported a variety of challenges in implementing the programme. These included large class sizes of 75 to 90 students and teachers' established practices. He described returning from South Korea and discussing his observations with senior teaching staff. With some modifications of the model to meet the needs of the school, the SNET programme was first introduced in 2011.

The Principal's positive description of SNET was supported by teachers' accounts. In the group interview, several teachers reported that SNET was a powerful mechanism that supported inclusion and achievement of all students. Describing her experiences as

a *nuclear* teacher, Asifa reported being both inspired and satisfied. Several teachers also described how the programme supported the inclusion of students with disabilities. Arosi described a student, Anik, with intellectual disabilities within her nuclear group. She reported assessing Anik, and identifying his challenges in mathematics, possibly related to difficulty retaining factual information. Arosi discussed Anik's difficulties with the mathematics teacher and together they developed an individual learning plan. She also reported discussing this focus with Anik's parents. The mathematics teacher also started to provide additional support for with Anik after school. As a result, Anik obtained a mark of 80% on the end of year maths examination.

Despite the reported success of SNET programme, some teachers raised concern that the programme imposed additional demands on their time. They reported that the programme was now an integral part of their work and required additional hours. However no additional remuneration was provided, although some recognition was provided to teachers who were identified as performing well in the SNET programme.

Tutor-71: Academic support to students for 24/7

School records showed that the school had incorporated various technologies for supporting students' learning. One of the technology-based practices that the school introduced was Tutor-71. This was a *Cloud-Based Micro-Tutoring Platform* that utilised a smartphone application that provided various communication channels including a website, direct phone call and SMS coverage for students and parents. According to the Principal, the initial vision of the programme was to find an effective way to provide teacher-based tuition for students outside regular school hours. Under Tutor-71 students or parents can connect with an expert teacher on any subject through the website, or by making a call or SMS.

Both the Principal and staff reported benefits of the Tutor-71 system. The Principal reported increased contact and engagement with parents. For example, if parents have an active mobile phone the school can share information about students' academic progress. A senior teacher reported improved academic supervision of students. The system also provided a mechanism for teachers to receive real-time feedback on their teaching. At this, Asifa added that the programme seemed successful, even though it imposed increased responsibility on teachers. Ruma reported that the system was supportive for improving student attendance and attentiveness. During a classroom observation a student with a disability described her experiences of Tutor-71 in

supporting an increased understanding of ICT. Using Tutor-71 from home she was connected to an ICT teacher who provided her with required information and clarification to support her learning.

Formative assessment: Weekly tests and feedback

Formative assessment practices involve the provision of qualitative feedback to support student's learning (Bennett, 2011). Positive links have been shown between learning outcomes for students and formative assessment practices (Furtak et al., 2016). The Principal of Ttajasbita School and College reported instructing teachers to increase formative feedback in the classroom and developing school-wide formative feedback practices. For example, weekly tests are used to monitoring students' progress and provide developmental feedback. The school conducts weekly multiple choice quizzes every Thursday. These quizzes are based on content taught throughout the preceding week. Regular practice examinations are also held on Saturdays using more open questioning requiring descriptive responses. Teachers mark quizzes and practice examinations providing feedback to students. Results are published for students, parents and teaching staff to review. The school's policy specifies that students have to obtain 80% marks in these practice examinations. Student who do not achieve these targets are reported to the Principal. Parents are then contacted via SMS message and invited to discuss ways that they can support their children's learning at home.

School practices for weaker students

In response to the question, "what does the school provide for disadvantaged students?", the Principal reported that the school's policies supported the inclusion of all students, as they encouraged all students to achieve good grades. He stated that the use of weekly tests was effective in identifying students who had difficulty learning new information. Both the class teacher and the SNET team play important roles in identifying and supporting students. For example, when an individual student is identified as having difficulties, a teacher is assigned as a tutor and also conducts discussions with the student's parents. The principal also reported the provision of additional before- or after-school classes with extra tutoring for identified students.

The Principal's reports were supported by teachers' descriptions of support for students who experience learning difficulties. Arosi described a monitoring system to track students' progress. Anjan reported the school's internal assessment system as a significant tool in supporting all students. Teachers also reported regularly discussing

concerns about progress of particular students with the Principal, with a focus on improving the students' performance. Asifa described a student with disabilities experiencing difficulty gaining good marks in mathematics weekly examinations. Asifa arranged after-school maths class and a study routine that involved consultation with the student's mother. Once the plan was in place the student began to show gradual improvement in examination scores.

Non-academic support for inclusion of students in a community of learning

Ttajasbita School and College also offers various non-academic support and opportunities for students. The reported aim of these initiatives is to help students' holistic development and they appear to be accessible for children with disabilities. The supports that the school introduced beyond academic arena are described below.

Separate common room for boys and girls

Teachers' accounts, as well as school records, reveal that the school provides various facilities for students. One of the services is the option of separate common rooms for dedicated use by boys and girls. The rooms are equipped with furniture and some indoor games. During the break period or during intervals, all students can use the common room at will. They even also use the space for rest if they are feeling unwell. In an interview, the Teacher-in-Charge reported that the intention of various non-academic supports and services was for students to feel like they are part of a broader shared learning community.

Learning opportunities beyond the academic context

During the interview with the Principal he stated the school's realisation of the importance of developing students' broader civic responsibilities. For example, the Principal expressed an expectation that students would develop a care for the environment and natural world. The school had an environmental campaign which involved sufficient rubbish bins in every building and awareness messages throughout the school. Students were observed placing litter or unnecessary papers in the designated bin or retained for re-use. Students were also reportedly encouraged to plant trees to support the environment.

Facilities to support student engagement

The school facilities included a computer lab, library and science lab. I noted in my field notes that the computer lab was located on the second floor, and remained open

for six days each week. The lab consists of 21 workstations, multimedia projector, printer and internet service. This lab was reported to be used for student teaching programmes and teacher training activities. The lab also provided limited printing facilities for teachers. A government-funded project supported the school in establishing this computer lab.

During my visit, I observed the library being used for regular teaching-learning activities. The Principal stated that a shortage of teaching space, meant the library was being used as a classroom. Therefore, the library was not in use which was noted by a teacher, Ruma, during the group interview, “I feel sorry for students because they are not able to use the library”.

A science lab was located on the fifth floor for the purpose of conducting the practical activities. The location of the science lab potentially contributed to negligible presence of disabled students in the grade 11-12 science. The school record showed the modern science laboratory was established with a goal of widening the horizon for learning in the context of the 21st century. The lab included scientific apparatus, models and instruments for Physics, Chemistry and Biology classes. During my visit to grade 10, a student with physical disabilities reported that he although he wanted to enrol in science, he had to change his selection when he discovered the location of the lab. I noted in my field notes that despite the quality of the lab, accessibility issues for students with disabilities was a barrier to their participation.

S-Ride as an important tool to increase students' mobility

In previous school chapters, transportation was identified as a challenge for students with physical disabilities to access school. Ttajasbita School and College had a transport system that offered support for students to travel to and from school. The Principal reported that transportation for students was first arranged in 2014 and became known as Students Ride (S-Ride). The system involves four buses with approximately 50 seats each. The buses travel different routes named after famous Bangladeshi rivers (e.g., Surma, Jamuna, Meghna). The bus routes cover a relatively small portion of the schools catchment area. The Principal reported a desire to increase the coverage of the S-Ride programme, "If resources are provided, the programme may be expanded to service more areas." A mother of a student with a disability stated the impact of this programme on her child and their family. She said, "I have cared for children, pets, and homes since I was 12 years old. This programme gave me feelings of relief. I was worried about

how my child could get to school. The school bus has relieved our stress." In the group interview, several teachers remarked about the significant of their S-Ride service and noted that it was supportive in increasing access and participation of students with disabilities.

Co-curricular activities and clubs to develop students' talent

Teachers' accounts and interview data revealed that a range of co-curricular activities provided opportunities for all students to participate in school activities. For example, Anjan reported that they provided many extra-curricular activities to support students' physical, mental, social and spiritual development. Arosi added that they also had arrangements for arts and crafts activities. A senior teacher also reported that the school organised various cultural events, such as new student reception, debating competitions, annual sports, and science fairs. Scouting and Girl Guides were also available and encouraged as these activities aligned with the school's vision of developing students as contributing citizens of the country. Although school records demonstrated the variety of clubs available, no student representative participated on the club committees. Teachers reported that the five most popular activities were scouts, debating, science, cultural, arts and handwriting, and English language.

Student awards system

The Principal described three awards intended to incentivise student participation and success. These awards were titled *Exclusive daily learner*, *School (S)-talent* and *School (S)-all-rounder*. The *exclusive daily learner* award was available to all students who were present and participated in class activities. The highest academic achiever within each grade received the *S-talent award*, and the students who achieved extraordinarily in the co-curricular activities alongside their academic studies could be nominated for the *S-All-rounder* award. The Principal reported an interesting link between the awards and school attendance, "Since we introduced the awards, absenteeism has decreased and competition among students has increased".

The Principal reported that the school had developed a culture of celebrating every extraordinary performance by students. He described the intention of these programmes was to create a sense of competition among students to do better. All the awards are provided formally by during an annual ceremony. During the group interview, several teachers reported their appreciation of the awards system. Arosi claimed that it added something positive to students' experience and helped motivate them to excel. Ruma

specifically identified increased motivation in a student with disabilities due to the effect of the awards programme. Another teacher, Anjan stated, "This glorious event helps students develop individual goals". The Teacher-in-Charge teacher reported that the programme was supportive of increasing confidence among all students including those with disabilities.

School practices for connecting parents

The engagement of parents with Ttajasbita School and College contrasted with parental involvement with other schools reported in this thesis. Sharma, Loreman and Macanawai (2016) argue that the role of the families, especially parents play a significant role in implementing inclusive education. However, as in the previously reported school case studies a number of barriers existed. Therefore, the task of school leaders is to minimise or remove the obstacles for active parent participation. Ttajasbita School and College actively undertakes activities and strategies to engage parents in decision-making processes concerning their children. The Principal emphasised the need to empower parents to play an active role in their children's learning. Similarly, teacher accounts reflected the importance of their relationships with parents.

The Principal outlined strategies the school used to overcome the "misinformation or miscommunication" that he perceived as a significant barrier to parent participation in school activities throughout Bangladesh. The Principal reported the appointment of a Chief Information Officer who was responsible for providing information to parents. The Principal also reported, "As a local citizen, I get huge cooperation from parents and guardians. I try to capitalise on this cooperation to develop the school. It makes a difference. For example, I involved them in the school's development planning". In the group interview, several teachers supported the Principal's comments. For example, Ruma acknowledged challenges of involving parents in teaching and learning activities. Anjan noted that parents were willing to take part in school activities and that this helped the school's success. Evidence from my field notes supported the reports by the Principal and teachers. While speaking with a parent of a child with disabilities, she stated, "I am totally up to date with the needs of my child. Keeping in touch with the school has ensured I know about my child's education".

Pedagogical practices to promote inclusion

The data from interviews and observations at Ttajasbita School and College suggested that a variety of teaching and learning strategies were either in practice or aspired to by staff. Teachers' accounts and classroom observation reflect that most of the teachers followed a child-centric approach. However, the large number of students in classes often restricts teachers' use of strategies. During the group interview with teachers, Abul stated, "On an average, we have 85-90 students in every class. If two or three disabled students are enrolled in each class, then it is difficult for us to support them, because we do not have additional support". In such cases, the respective class teacher referred the students to the *nuclear* teacher.

The Principal identified that much of the school's success was attributable to efforts in improving pedagogical practices. He stated that most teachers were familiar with participatory approaches to teaching and learning, characterised by "love, sincerity and cordiality". The Principal further explained, "if teachers do their job with an attitude of love towards students and strong determination, then the school will succeed". In line with this a teacher, Ruma, stated that the Principal motivated them to do everything from their hearts as well as minds. Arosi added at this point that the supporting environment drove them to perform in the classroom.

The Principal also described the concept of "empowering teachers" as a way of gaining support of teachers. In describing this he stated, "We believe in teachers' autonomy in terms of classroom practices. Every teacher has the right to decide the teaching methods for their students. The teachers also need to show a clear duty of care for students."

The Principal also raised the issue of remuneration and teachers practices. He said, "if teachers are deprived of expected financial benefits, it is not possible for them to provide maximum effort in the classroom". Then he informed that the school held a generous policy in the distribution of financial benefits among staff members. Therefore, the teachers seemed happy, and it was claimed their happiness contributed to better teaching.

The integration of technology was a pedagogical practice observed at the school. Most teachers reported incorporating technologies in their classes. The school had established six multimedia classrooms and were planning to convert all 103 classrooms to *multimedia classrooms*. A teacher, Abul, said, "Presenting a class through multimedia is fascinating to students". Anjan added, "Digital presentation of teaching

and learning makes the students more attentive". Plans were also underway to develop school-specific digital content for class activities.

Teachers were asked to provide their opinion on teaching and learning strategies that might support inclusion of student with disabilities. Teachers reported that they utilised group activities, peer learning, cooperative learning, question-answer, role play, and class demonstrations as their main strategies. Most teachers interviewed reported no specific problems with supporting students with disabilities. For example, Abul said, "I have no problem teaching in an inclusive classroom, because I teach with love". Anjan focused on personal skills of teacher and said, "For me, teaching in an inclusive classroom, skills, patience, and personality are critical factors... a teacher should try to be a friend to students." Awlad stated empathetically, "The disabled! They are human like us. Therefore, a teacher needs to apply a more humanistic teaching approach". Although these positive comments provided a positive situation at the school, data collected also suggested a number of challenges as the school attempts to become more inclusive, perhaps the most significant one was a difference between what was said and what was done.

Challenges for the school to embrace inclusive education

A cross case analysis revealed challenges in increasing inclusive education varied from micro to macro levels. The challenges raised from the school focus on examination success, limited scope for teacher to receive training on disability and education, large classes, accessibility of school infrastructure, and limited teaching resources. These challenges are further described below.

Teachers' professional development

Although the school had a teacher development programme in place, teachers' accounts revealed a lack of access to training in teaching children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. This was reported as a major barrier to effectively supporting students with disabilities. The Principal confirmed that teachers had little or no training in disability and inclusion. He reported a scarcity of specific disability-focussed professional development options in Bangladesh.

Awareness and affordability

Teachers' accounts revealed two major obstacles for educating children with disabilities at this secondary school, namely lack of awareness of children's needs and

families' ability to afford tuition for their children. These obstacles were stated by teachers Asifa and Anjan. Asifa stated that she found most of the parents of children with disabilities were unaware about the learning needs for their children. Anjan raised the issue of the comparatively higher tuition fees for Ttajasbita School and College. Therefore, with high levels of poverty among local families, many could not afford the fees for their children to attend school.

A rigid admission system

Teachers' responses during the group interview identified the school's admission requirements as barrier to enrolment for children with disabilities. Teachers reported that the current admission procedure was limiting the entry of children with disabilities. Initially, Abul stated that the admission process was equal for all students. However, Awlad reported there were very few students with disabilities who were sitting the entrance test due to the competitive nature of the process. The positive reputation of the school reportedly attracted many parents to attempt to enrol their children thereby increasing the competition for places. According to Asifa this resulted in children with disabilities competing with 30 non-disabled students for a place in the school. Interestingly, Ruma appeared to attribute the low levels of enrolment to parents at this point by stating most parents of children with disabilities doubted children's ability and therefore did not attempt to enrol their children. Similarly, Awlad added that many parents of disabled children might consider payment of the admission test fee would be a waste of their money.

Teachers' understanding of national policies relating to inclusive education

Forlina and Chambers (2011) reported that teachers' increasing knowledge about legislation and policy related to inclusion could support teachers' levels of confidence in developing inclusive practices. Therefore, during the group interview I drew teachers' attention to government policy regarding the rights of children with disabilities to be educated in a mainstream school. While teachers acknowledged these policies, they also raised some challenges in implementing those policies. Asifa said with some frustration, "Many good words are included in the policy text, but the context is not acknowledged". Anjan then stated that the intention of the new law, *Rights and Protection Act for Persons with Disabilities 2013*, was to make the education system inclusive, free and supportive to all students. "The great irony is that many schools like

ours are still not ready to embrace inclusion.” Asifa added that the policy did not provide a monetary resource allocation to enable schools to support all students. Ruma then identified that policy failed to include a binding obligation to provide access to children with disabilities, resulting in many schools denying enrolment to children with disabilities.

Several teachers perceived and criticised the government's failure to consult adequately with teachers before the formulation of the policies. Awlad claimed that a reason so few policies, aimed at improving education, were implemented was due to teachers' input or opinions being ignored. Abul stated that writing and issuing policies was not enough to introduce inclusive education. Ruma further added that a significant issue was the absence of explicit lines of communication between educators and policymakers. The teacher discussion continued to revolve around issues relating to government policy, educational initiatives and disabilities. The Principal exclaimed "If we would go forward with inclusion, we have to do it by ourselves. If we wait for additional government support, inclusion will never see the morning sun".

When asked what could be done to support policy implementation teachers reported additional resources and also changes in societal attitudes. For example, Asifa suggested recruiting specialised teachers and setting up separate classrooms. Anjan added that specialist supports such as occupational therapy, and physiotherapy for children with disabilities should be available in schools. Several teachers stated the need to move the social view of disabilities from a welfare-based to a rights-based approach. Teachers identified the dominance of *welfare* discourse as a barrier towards inclusion. The Principal acknowledged that current policies recognised disability from a rights perspective, but claimed it was being practised under a welfare-based view. Asifa then highlighted that education of children with disabilities was managed by the Ministry of Social Welfare, not by the Ministry of Education. Additionally Anjan suggested the need for changing individuals' views about the education of children with disabilities. Discussion then turned to funding for educating students with disabilities. Abul recommended that the costs of providing inclusive education should be viewed as a social investment and that increased funding was needed.

Limited options for accessing and mobilising community resources

In a Pakistan and Bangladesh study, Crozier and Davies (2007) explored what parents knew about their children's education. Findings suggested that parents knew very little

and had minimum or no involvement with their children's schools. A more recent study of the Bangladesh primary school context identified that community factors affect learners' achievement, and can contribute to ensuring the quality of education (Alam, 2015). However, the researcher stated that relations between families, communities and schools in Bangladesh were an area for further development. These findings contrast with the data collected at Ttajasbita School and College.

Observation and interview data highlighted that this school had a positive relationship with the surrounding community. This was highlighted by community participation in different community activities undertaken at the school. However, the Principal stated that the supports received from the local community were not enough to ensure inclusiveness of all students. In this respect, he suggested that community resources be mobilised to provide the needed infrastructure and aids to support inclusive education. An example stated was that no options were available for providing health support for students. The Principal saw a potential solution in connecting with local health centres. He also reported several government initiatives aimed at supporting persons with disabilities through the newly established country-wide disability support centres called *Services and Help Centre for Persons with Disabilities*. This service was provided at the upazilla level. These centres were designed to support assessment and diagnosis, assistive devices and counselling for persons with disabilities. The Principal suggested that these centres present an opportunity for mobilisation of specialist services to support children, their families, and teachers.

Discussion of emerging themes

This case highlighted stories and experiences of the school Principal, teachers and parents. The Principal took great pride in the school's academic and extra-curricular achievements. Teachers were clear in articulating their realities and understood there was no magic wand to making inclusion happen in their school. The case also revealed a level of inclusive education practices for students with disabilities who were able to successfully navigate the admission test, which suggests a level of equity exists within the school. Four emergent themes linked to the overriding theme 'equity behind a closed door'. These are: i) Equity and emphasis on standards; ii) Leadership; iii) Equitable classroom practices; and, iv) A collaborative school atmosphere.

Equity and emphasis on standards

In order to maintain their position at the top of public examination results table in Bangladesh the school had a significant focus on students' academic performance. This is consistent with claims made by Davies and Bansel (2007) that schools focus on raising standards and levels of achievement are driven by neoliberal ideologies. However, the school's philosophy was to create equal opportunities for every student to do well in examinations. The over emphasis on examination results supported the development of innovative strategies (i.e., remedial teaching, home visits, and SNET) to foster the success of every student. Participants stated these initiatives were the essence of this school's inclusive initiatives. Johnson and Busby (2015) argued that the task of inclusion in the mainstream classroom is to remove the existing inequalities in terms of student achievement in schools. Kim (2013) identified competition-driven school climates as a key challenge to overcome in order to successfully implement inclusive education in Korean schools.

Teachers' accounts and interview data revealed that every student had access to additional support from the school. As a result, students with disabilities were also scoring well on examinations. The school reported this as evidence of inclusion. However, measuring inclusion by students' examination success alone is problematic. Success in the examination could simply mean that students have rote-learned information from the textbook and teacher. This case provides impetus for debate about the educational goals for children with disabilities in Bangladesh. According to Hornby (1994), the ultimate goal is to produce well-adjusted and productive citizens as well as preparing children with disabilities to live independently (UNESCO, 1994).

The effectiveness of inclusive education for children depends on how schools respond to their diverse needs (Das, Das, & Kattumuri, 2013). The differences between the nominated and implicit goals of the school contributed to an apparent complexity within their practice. In line with the national policy, a goal of the school was to be inclusive for all and offer a quality education, but the intended goal was to raise the examination results of students. As a result, competition existed among teachers and students. A question that remains unanswered is how many children with disabilities are not applying for admission or being rejected for admission to the school?

Leadership

Lyons (2016) identified that school leadership is key to successful implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities. Similarly, the importance of institutional leadership in the context of inclusive education has been noted by several researchers (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Angelides, 2012; Black & Simon, 2014; Liasidou, & Antoniou, 2015). The findings of this school case illustrated that decisive leadership is contributing in some aspects to inclusive education practice at the school. The Principal's leadership has inspired teachers to conduct classroom practices in ways to support all students' learning. In addition, prioritising teacher autonomy was another initiative reported to support teachers' efforts. Tschannen-Moran and Tschannen-Moran (2014) reported three school leadership strategies that could improve teacher confidence and foster student learning and success. These strategies are i) manage with active presence and enthusiasm, ii) empathy towards staff, and iii) focus on strengths and successes rather than weaknesses and problems. Teachers' accounts revealed that they felt encouraged and supported by the Principal. Several teachers also suggested that the school leadership was supportive of the school's move towards inclusion. However the main challenge for the school leadership is to find ways to include more children with disabilities. This is not an isolated or school-specific issue as Mullick, Deppeler, and Sharma (2012) reported the major challenge for school leaders in Bangladesh is determining how to mitigate perceived and actual inequalities of inclusive education practices.

Equitable classroom practices

Data from teacher interviews suggest that teachers at Ttajasbita School and College were sincere and caring in their practices. A child-centric pedagogy and close supervision of students' progress contributed to apparently equitable classroom practices for all students. Fostering students' learning through initiatives such as the Tutor-71 system suggested that teachers were willing to extend their support beyond a typical school day. Hanushek and Rivkin (2006) argued that teachers play the fundamental role in the determination of school quality.

The case analysis revealed importance was placed on two effective classroom practices viewed as important supporting all students. These were formative assessment and learner-centric teaching approach. Bennett (2011) suggests that the formative assessment practices can facilitate student's learning. Furtak et al., (2016) reported a

positive link between learning outcomes for students and formative assessment practices. Similarly, Owen (2016) argued that concrete and constructive feedback can create an opportunity for students to review their work and learn. Riddell (2016) suggested that formative assessment supports teacher to effectively monitor student achievement. A learner-centric teaching approach has been noted as critical for an effective inclusive classroom (Mitchell, 2014).

Collaborative school atmosphere

Paterson, Graham and Stevens (2014) reported that the success of equity programmes in schools is dependent on the positive relationships between teachers and students and also between teachers and their colleagues. Data in this case suggest that a significant characteristics of the school practices is the framework of collaboration among different stakeholders. Obiakor (2011) argued that to achieve equitable and inclusive arrangements, collaboration and consultation with all stakeholders must be at the forefront. Teachers' accounts and interview data suggested five types of collaboration were present and contributed to the school's success. These are: i) collaboration among teachers and staff; ii) collaboration between school and parents; iii) collaboration between students with and without disabilities; iv) collaboration between educators and students; and, v) collaboration between school and community.

This case analysis indicated that the school administrators had a strong relationship with staff members. Shani and Koss (2015) suggested that successful inclusive education is created through collaboration of staff members. Analysis of teachers' accounts and interview data reflects that teachers' collaboration and availability of input and feedback from colleagues contributed to developing inclusive practices. Although effective parent engagement is difficult, the case reflects that the school viewed parents as an active agent their children's education. The school had undertaken strategies to ensure participation of parents in school activities which appeared to support positive home – school relationships. The Principal was clear about the need for collaboration with parents to support children to become responsive and connected with their learning. Recent literature supports parental engagement in schools to support students learning. For example, Bennett, Mander and Richards (2016) explored the positive impact of parental involvement in their children's educational attainment. Similarly, Sharma, Loreman and Macanawai (2016) argued that families played a significant role in implementing inclusive education. Kendall and Taylor (2016) claim that the failure

to engage in partnership with parents has negative effects on the inclusion of children with disabilities at a mainstream school. Data revealed that the school had a good relationship with the local community but would have liked additional support from the local community-based organisations such as the health centre and disability resource centre.

Conclusion

This case highlights that to be an inclusive school is not easy - even for one of the so-called *best performing secondary schools* in Bangladesh. It is evident from the above case analysis that this school added value to students' performance (Marks, 2015). Several innovative practices have been introduced to support student's performance. For example, extracurricular activities and clubs to support broader aspects of student learning. Examining the current practices of the school using an inclusive education lens may enable readers to understand the dynamism of educational practices in regards to inclusion of children with disabilities. It provides insight into steps needed to ensure educational rights of children with disabilities. Some practices observed were innovative and supportive for inclusion. These could be trialled and replicated in other schools. However, significant challenges existed in terms of the school's infrastructure and teachers' knowledge. Teachers described a tension in terms of potentially including more severely disabled students in the classroom. They cited their lack of knowledge and skills in supporting such students. Similarly, the admission system, and structural design of the school building provided barriers for children with disabilities.

Despite the challenges, this case showcases an aspirational school that has introduced a culture of inclusion of all enrolled students. The school plays a critical role to ensure that all students were given the best opportunity to succeed – which could be the essence of inclusion. Finally, this quote from the Principal encapsulates aspects of the case, “I don’t have any detailed plan for inclusion at this time,” he said. “I hope there will be various programmes and continuity within the school. But I have nothing to say with respect to what has emerged at this moment in terms of inclusion.”

Chapter Ten

Tension between Inclusive Education Policies and Practices for Children with Disabilities: Analysis of Professional Conversations with Bangladesh's Experts

We now have a comprehensive Act like the IDEA... we have all options within current policies. In fact many steps have already been taken to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to education. Scholarship schemes supporting their education from Class-II to Masters have introduced... disability allowances are also provided. All disadvantaged, including children with disabilities, are a policy priority for classroom teaching-learning. [Tajim, a senior academic]

Introduction

This chapter describes a series of discussions with relevant Bangladesh policymakers and academics involved in education. The key theme identified is that of tensions between inclusive education policies and practices within Bangladesh's education system. These tensions have emerged as the result of a mismatch between aspirations of policy and the grounded realities within Bangladesh's schools and communities. The data reported and analysed in this chapter were obtained from 10 conversations or interviews with identified experts in Bangladesh. These included a politician, non-governmental organisation (NGO) representatives, education academics and government officials. The conversations were focused on, but not limited to, specific issues related to inclusive education policies and practices as shown in Table 1 below. The findings suggest both a gap between policy and practice and that Bangladesh's move towards inclusive education is due mostly to external influences such as the financial support provided by foreign donor organisations.

In the ten years since ratification of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCRPD), Bangladesh has undertaken a range of legal reforms aimed at meeting its obligations under this agreement (UN, 2006). Consistent with the UNCRPD, Bangladesh's national policies indicate a desire for an education system that is inclusive, free and supportive to all. Despite such policy stipulations, contrastive practices are observed in local schools and community contexts as described

in the earlier school chapters. Sudden changes of policy direction and central government directives provide complex challenges for secondary schools to implement policies. The school participants identified a range of factors contributing to the complexity. For example, they reported that schools were not adequately prepared to address shortcomings of traditional educational practices that do not support the inclusion of students with disabilities. Although there is a mismatch between policies and practices, the participants reported that Bangladesh's move towards inclusion will continue from the platforms that policy changes have established. As such, ongoing efforts in support of the reforms are needed to ensure that the educational rights of children with disabilities are met. In turn these reforms will satisfy Bangladesh's obligations under the UNCRPD.

The following table describes the professionals who participated in the interviews and the general areas covered during the conversations.

Table 9.
Participants in the policy conversations

Code	Pseudonym	Criteria	Specific focus of the conversations
AC1 & AC2	Tajim Sultana	Two senior academics, working in public universities, specialised in the field of education, policy and disability;	Philosophy, policies and practices, gaps between policy and practice;
PE [policy expert]	Zahir	A person involved in preparing the latest National Education Policy (2010);	Global influences, implementation of educational policies and obstacles, gaps between policy and practice;
G-1	Akhter	Two top-level government administrators who have experience in policy formulation and also had responsibilities in policy implementation at the field level;	Policy process, implementation of IE for children with disabilities, gaps between policy and practice, training and teacher development for inclusive education, and administrative issues related to inclusion [placement and others];
G-2	Anis		
NE	Kabir	Two key persons from a development organisation who have influences on government policies [One from the national level NGO and another from an INGO];	Policy process, International influences, collaboration, implementation of IE for children with disabilities, gaps between policy and practice;
IN	Ajmal		
TE	Syed	A teacher educator who is involved with in-service and pre-service secondary teacher training in terms of inclusive education;	Teacher development and their practices in terms of IE, Inclusive Education in practice in schools;
AS	Tahmida	A person with experiences of working in the public examinations for secondary schools in Bangladesh. The chief executive [Chairman] of an secondary and higher secondary education board that is responsible for national assessment;	Evaluation and assessment and curriculum issues;
MP	Mahmuda	A member of the National Parliament who is especially assigned to the standing committee for education and/or disability.	Policy formation, global influences, expectations and future thinking.

Note: IE denotes Inclusive Education, AC – Academic, PE – Policy expert, G-1 – Government official one, G-2- Government official two, NE- National NGO expert, IN- International non-government organisation expert, TE –Teacher Educator, AS – Assessment specialist, MP- Member of Parliament

Contextualising inclusive education

The following sections examine how inclusive education is conceptualised by the experts in Bangladesh. Understanding the context for moving towards inclusive education is crucial for deciding the Bangladesh position in regards to education of children with disabilities. In a recent study, Korsgaard (2016) argued that:

Many positions within inclusive education seem to take political, social and ethical perspectives as a starting point, which has allowed inclusive movements and initiatives around the world to succumb to neoliberal policy-making and has neglected the development of an educational vocabulary that is theoretically and conceptually appropriate for confronting teachers' central concerns regarding inclusive practices. (p.934)

Responses from participants indicated that they conceptualised inclusive education differently. They (re)defined the goals of inclusive education and also raised the contextualised debate about the intention of inclusive education. Noteworthy was that all perceived inclusive education as a donor-supported initiative in Bangladesh.

(Re)defining the goal of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Bangladesh

The contextual goals for inclusive education in Bangladesh were explored with the experts. The participants recognise that Bangladesh's goals would be different from many other countries, as the country had just started its journey towards inclusive education. They mentioned that the goal of inclusive education could vary from context to context. The policy expert Jahir reported that a major goal for the policies is: "Not a single child with a disability will be left out of school". Similarly, Mahmuda, policy-maker, said: "Our target is to arrange education for children with disabilities, so that they can achieve their dreams and aspirations through education". Syed said: "Our goal is quite different from the goals of developed countries". In a similar vein, Kabir stated: "What I understand about the vision of Bangladesh inclusive education is that it is about bringing those children who are missing out or remain outside of schools, into education". Conversely, Sultana perceived the goal more broadly, as she said: "Inclusive education is not only about bringing children with disabilities into the mainstream education. A major task is to ensure quality education for all children".

Several participants stated that the goals of inclusive education for Bangladesh were to meet constitutional commitments. For example, Sultana said: “As the perhaps terminal education for many Bangladesh children, the goal of secondary education is to prepare them either for further education or employment for independent living. Therefore, inclusive education at the secondary level should also focus on vocational skills”.

In identifying the goal of inclusive education for secondary schools, participants suggested revisiting the classroom. Zahir stated: “How students with diverse learning needs are taught and how teachers are addressing their diverse needs in the classroom are two major questions to consider for setting goals of inclusive education at secondary level”. Exploring the meaning of inclusiveness at secondary level, Anis responded: “Inclusiveness for secondary education means *ensuring teaching-learning facilities* in the classroom so that all types of students are welcomed and can learn”.

The intention of inclusive education: For all children including disabilities, or for a specific group of children with disabilities?

Participants reported differing opinions on the scope of inclusive education. These ranged from the notion of full inclusion to partial inclusion. To illustrate this Sultana stated: “The goal of inclusive education should be to comply with the focus of UNCRPD, thus including all children in schools is the key goal”. In contrast, the education commission member Zahir said: “Full inclusion in terms of including all types of children in the classroom as per the direction of UNCRPD is not optimistic in our context because our school system is not ready to teach severely disabled children”. A contrast in opinions and perspectives was also observed between the academics and development organisations. Academic staff clearly preferred inclusive education for children with specific types of disability. Whereas personnel from development organisations preferred inclusive education for all, but questioned the reality of this goal. Interestingly, the government officials, policymaker and teacher educator, were clear that they did not believe that inclusive education for all children with disabilities was possible or realistic. Syed said: “we only can bring those children with disabilities who are mild in nature and can do academic work by themselves”. Similarly, Akhter added: “We are not in a position to bring all children with disabilities to mainstream high schools because most of the schools do not have sufficient mechanisms to deal with a severely disabled child”. Mahmuda added: “Therefore we have taken various initiatives to develop special education facilities for children with disabilities. We have

already intended to establish special schools for children with disabilities in every district within the country". Supporting this stance, Kabir who was working with a national NGO stated:

Theoretically, it could be possible to bring all sorts of children with disabilities to mainstream schools, but practically it is not feasible for our general secondary schools. At present, only children with a minor disability [i.e., without a hand, or leg, low vision or moderate hearing impairment] could study in mainstream secondary schools. The present structures of the schooling system are not supportive of educating severely disabled children.

Conceptualising inclusive education as a donor-supported initiative

The role of donor organisations in the inclusive education movement in Bangladesh is important to understand. This section provides evidence from participants about the influence of donors on the inception of inclusive education in Bangladesh secondary schools. The information reported in this section is based on conversation data from three experts (i.e., Anis [G2], Tajim [AC1] and Ajmal [IN]). They were clear that inclusive education was a donor-led initiative in Bangladesh. The following is a blended summary of the initiatives they recounted:

The formal inception of inclusive education has occurred recently with contributions from various donor-funded projects. For example, inclusive education was introduced at the primary level by a World Bank-funded project known as the Primary Education Development Programme [PEDP] in 2004. The transition of inclusive education to the secondary school was inaugurated by another donor-funded project called *Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project [TQI-SEP]* in 2006. The Asian Development Bank and the CIDA were the primary partners in this project. The second phase of the project named as TQI-II [2012] set a target of improving the quality of secondary education in Bangladesh. The focus of the project was to strengthen teacher training programmes as well as the organisational capacity of the education system. Moreover, the project had set a further goal of supporting inclusive education. Out of four components of the TQI-II Project, component no. 3 focused on inclusive education and targeted inclusive education at the secondary level. The key goal is to strengthen inclusive education policy and programme,

increase participation of female teachers and disadvantaged groups, and increasing the involvement of women on school managing committee.

Anis described a donor's leverage in setting project activities: "In many cases, we had to compromise with the donor's will. According to the aide memo, we had to appoint the consultants and experts from outside of the country, even though we have experts in our country". He further described the implementation process of the project as follows:

During project implementation initiatives, the leading firms were assigned from outside of Bangladesh. According to the guidelines for this ADB/CIDA-funded project, a foreign company had been given the sole responsibility of implementing the project. In conjunction with other foreign and local firms, they have provided all sorts of teacher training to eligible teachers in Bangladesh secondary schools and also formulated the necessary policies for the country.

His academic experience prompted Tajim to describe the influence of an overseas organisation that introduced modifications to a secondary teacher pre-service [B.Ed] curriculum. The changes reflected a developed country's curriculum and created challenges for students. The curriculum included a new paper on Action Research, for which the assessment was a research report written in English. The project failed, and after two years the project was re-developed. Tajmin added that donor organisation appeared to undertake experimental initiatives in developing countries. Therefore, he suggested being careful of dependency on donor input.

Aspirations or intentionality

The participants reported the existence of multidimensional drivers in the progress towards inclusive education. They perceived pressures from both external and internal sources (see figure 15). The external pressure came from the global policy expectations, particularly from various UN conventions via donor agencies. Reported internal sources of pressure included the desire for economic advancement, humanitarian movements, growing awareness among political leaders and increasing involvement of parents of children with disabilities. These drivers have contributed to a recent government focus on disability and reforming the education system to the support children with disabilities. These drivers are discussed further below.

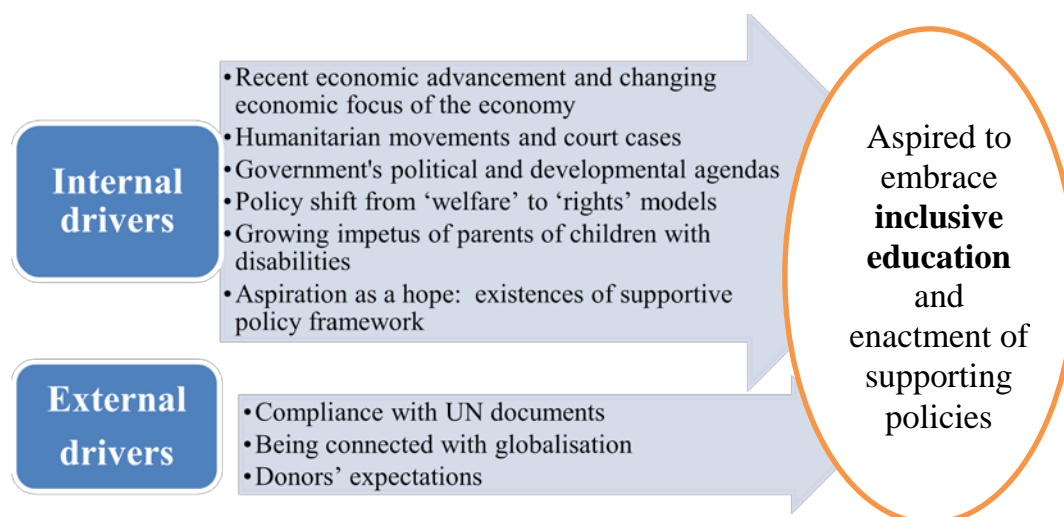


Figure 15. Internal and external drivers for inclusive education

Economic advancement and change of economic focus

Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson (2011) argued that education and aspiration have been changing rapidly in the twenty-first century due to the influences of neoliberal philosophies that promote access to quality education. However, the aspiration of education policy reform is related to parental expectation that “their children will do well academically and achieve consequent success in the labour market” (p.84). Such influences are also evident in Bangladesh, as several participants claimed that ensuring education for all children was crucial to foster the country’s economic growth. In this sense, they perceived inclusive education as a means of achieving this goal. Zahir explained a recent initiative to include children with disabilities in the mainstream: “Economic pressures are pushing us to include all children in the mainstream schools, because we are not capable of establishing countrywide disability-specific schools for children with disabilities”. Sultana expressed that the country’s shift of focus from social justice to capitalism is supporting the progression to inclusive education. In order to embrace the capitalist model in development, it becomes necessary to educate all citizens within a short period of time. She said:

From my point of view, the changing nature of our social structure is due to the influence of capitalism which is affecting the education system... our targeted economic determinism is limiting our choice of reforming the school system for children with disabilities except for an inclusive education approach.

Zahir assumed that inclusive education was inevitable for the Bangladesh education system due to the pressure of macroeconomics. He stated:

There seems to be no compelling reason to argue for a separate system of education for children with disabilities. Due to the cost effectiveness, we have to go for inclusive education, because it provides us with the opportunity to educate children with disabilities without establishing separate schools.

The policy shift: From welfare-based to rights-based models

The participants were asked to reflect on the changes in policies and practices in the education system for supporting children with disabilities. A key theme identified was the shift from *welfare-based* to *rights-based* models. For example, Tajim described this shift as “moving out from the darkness to improve the plight of children with disabilities’ education”. Mahmuda added: “Evidence for this shift is replacement of the *Disability Welfare Act 2001* with the *Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013*”. Although the policy changes reflect the shift, changes in beliefs and practices are likely to take place over many years.

Growing humanitarian awareness

According to Kabir, Bangladesh’s awareness of humanitarian approaches to supporting children has been increasing since the 1990s. This awareness has in turn supported the development of disability issues in Bangladesh. He described the role of increased awareness:

If we look back to the mid-1990s, disability issues were dominated by the discourse of *ignorance, fear, and superstition* at all levels of our society. Superstition was rife in the community. Usually, the male-dominated society blamed women for giving birth to a disabled child.

He suggested that different humanitarian-focused NGOs had started the movement against discrimination of persons with disabilities. The movement involved conducting large awareness raising programmes. Similarly, Ajmal stated the history and role of NGOs:

We established an apex federating body of non-governmental organisations working in the field of disability and development in 1991. This *National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled* [NFOWD] has become our platform for pressuring the government and also operating countrywide advocacy to establish rights of persons with disabilities. Due to these combined and coordinated interventions to uphold the rights and privileges of persons with disabilities, attitudes began to change.

The movement to operationalise policies

This section explores the movement to operationalise disability policies which emphasise inclusive education at all levels of the Bangladesh education system. Several participants reported that the movement of the humanitarian activists from civil society was the inspiration for ensuring inclusive education practices were implemented.

Kabir explained that the government had enacted disability legislation (RPDDA) in 2013, but did not appear interested in its implementation. He questioned the government's willingness to realise its commitment towards establishing the rights of persons with disabilities. Then he described their initiative to operationalise the Act, first by filing a petition to the Supreme Court, challenging the delay of establishing guidelines and publishing Gazette notifications to operationalise the RPDDA (2013). Ajmal also stated that he was involved in initiatives to support the rights of persons with disabilities. He stated: "To create pressure on the government, we formed a coalition disability rights activists and lawyers in April 2010. We filed subsequent petitions to the highest Judiciary for Justice". He further narrated the story behind the enforcement of the RPDDA (2013). Theoretically, the Act came into force (just after the enactment) on the 9th October 2013. However, the Government held up two critical Articles [31 & 36] for more than two years. Therefore, the law was on the record, but with no effect on practice. Ajmal continued the story:

We had to go the High Court Division to gain directives for the Government to implement the law. Before that, we had conducted extensive advocacy and lobbying to convince the government to publish the Gazette Notification to operationalise the provisions under the Act. But we failed to get the bureaucrats or policymakers to understand its importance. They informed us that they had passed the Act in line with our demands. That's all.

Ajmal further added:

We challenged the delay in government initiatives to operationalise the Act. We filed a writ petition in November 2015. Section 31 of the Act provides for registration and issuance of identity cards to persons with disabilities, and further states that no individual with a disability will be able to secure any protections if they don't have the card. Section 36 imposed a legal remedy including compensation against any discrimination based on disability and guaranteed the rights of disabled persons against such discrimination.

Anis described that in response to their Writ Petition, a Division Bench of the High Court issued a Rule Nisi on the 18th of May 2015. The court ordered to show cause regarding the delay in publishing a gazette notification that was required to activate the Sections 31 and 36, and the court made a further query about why there were not framed Rules yet under Section 41 of the Act. Finally, the court declared that the failure to publish a gazette notification as required by section 1[2][b] of the Act of 2013 to bring into force sections 31 and 36 of the said Act constitutes a violation of fundamental rights of persons with disabilities, in particular, the rights to equality and to be treated in accordance with the law, as guaranteed under Articles 27 and 31 of the Constitution.

Aspirations from political and developmental agendas of the Government

Political will is critical to the implementation and success of including children with disabilities in education (Irvine, 2015). The data from participants reflect that a strong political commitment to ensure the rights of children with disabilities had influenced disability policy in Bangladesh. According to these experts, government political agendas had also forced it to implement inclusive education. Mahmuda reported that the inclusive education initiative was due to the commitment of her Government. She said:

Education has been identified as one of the priority sectors of the government to realise their long-term goal: the *Vision-2021*. To achieve the goal, we had no alternative to including children with disabilities in the ordinary schools, because it would either not be practical or possible to establish sufficient special schools for children with disabilities in the timeframe.

She further stated: “Our political commitment to education is clearly stated in our national constitution that also supports inclusive education”. She again said: “Look, we have explicitly included the education rights of children with disabilities in our election manifesto”. Anis described the inclusion of disability issue in the political manifesto as an expression to change that could be seen as a positive transformation of the political culture towards the development of a more humane approach to supporting children with disability. Finally, Sultana identified the growing awareness among the political leaders of the country for advanced initiatives to educate children with disabilities, as she said: “Though the importance of education is recognised by the leaders of the country, educational development has received the greatest emphasis in the struggle for economic survival of the country”.

Aspiration for a supportive policy framework

Several participants stated their hopes and aspirations for inclusive education as opening up horizons for children with disabilities. Tajim described the power of inclusive education:

Opening up the door for a large number of children with disabilities who are now out of education. Their participation in education may open up a whole world for them. A successful inclusive education policy can influence all areas of national development.

Data from conversations also affirmed that the supportive policy frameworks were aspiring to foster inclusive education for children with disabilities. Akhter during the professional conversations said: “We are at an early stage, but our positivity to create an appropriate learning environment for children with disabilities is underpinning inclusive movements”. Mahmuda said:

Since independence, we have been confronted by a large number of problems to reform our education system according to the spirit of our independence war. Gradually, we are overcoming problems by changing policies. In fact, the issues of appropriate input, process and output and their relationships are drawing our attention to introducing an inclusive education system for children with disabilities.

Tajim reviewed the constitution and said: “It provides the first supportive framework to establish an inclusive education system”. Similarly, Sultana added: “Having the supportive constitutional policy makes the task of educating children with disabilities easier”.

Growing impetus of parents of children with disabilities

Increasing awareness and visibility of children with disabilities appears to be driving changes in policy and practice. For example, Kabir reported: “Parents very rarely hide their disabled children from society. Most parents have learned to adapt to the environment with their children with disabilities”. Several participants also identified a shift in societal consciousness about education and disabilities. The experts marked the recent countrywide interventions made by the government and non-government initiatives as significant factors in shifting parents’ attitudes. Akhter said: “In the past, it was often seen that parents were adverse to educating their disabled children”. Syed provided possible reasons for changes in public and parent perceptions: “Due to the

massive awareness initiatives by the government using mass media, the stereotypical misconceptions are melting away. Now parents realise the importance of their disabled child's education". Mahmuda added: "As parents are now more aware and informed, there are increasing rates of school enrolment for children with disabilities". Regarding the shift in parental attitudes, Tajim reported that parents were shifting their belief that their children with disabilities could only be educated in special schools or separate education programmes.

External aspirational drivers: The UN and donors

It was clear from interview responses that pressure from external organisations was a significant driving force for reform of the Bangladesh education system. The main sources of these external forces were UN documents, globalisation, and donor expectations. Several participants perceived positive consequences of these drivers. However, a few contrasting opinions were stated. Responding to a question about how the disability and education policies were formulated in Bangladesh, Kabir stated: "The policy is formulated by influences of outsiders". More specifically, a government official Anis added: "especially by the influence of the UN documents". Interestingly, Ajmal reported: "Bangladesh had some influence on the UNCRRPD, because we actively participated in the preparation of the convention text".

The perceived pressure from the UNCRRPD for Bangladesh to develop an inclusive education system was reported as positive by several participants. Mahmuda said: "We are now very conscious about mainstream education for children with disabilities due to our commitment to UNCRC and UNCRRPD". Focusing on the obligations under the UNCRRPD, Kabir said: "The UNCRRPD has created an opportunity for our local system to be inclusive. It could be a signpost for our future education system reform". Focusing on the education for children with disabilities, Sultana argued that the global child-rights movement accelerated Bangladesh's initiative to educate children with disabilities in mainstream settings. As she said:

Even in the last decade, children with disabilities have been considered a separate group because of their *special* needs. This was used to segregate them from other children in the family, neighborhood, and society. Approaches are being developed for them while forgetting they are part of society and have the same rights as other children. Rights to education, participation, development, and recreation all fit for *normal* children. Attention to children with disabilities

only seems to emerge when reflecting on CRC Article 23. Training kits, manuals, promotional materials about CRC focus on the rights issue as a general approach which acknowledges the rights of all children – however, without attempting to include children with disabilities.

In addition to the influence of UN policies, the participants explored the role of the development partners (donors) in developing inclusive education for children with disabilities. A government official, Anis, highlighted on the influence of donor contributions:

We rely heavily on the sponsorship of external donors for various development projects. Education is no exception - we are dependent on donor contributions for about a third of our education *development* budget. Therefore, we welcome the ideas which come from the donors.

Linking with this statement, another government official, Akhter, mentioned that the development of inclusive education system in the country had been strongly supported by the donor community. He explained:

As they [donors] have given a high priority to inclusion of children with disabilities especially in primary education and increasing access for disabled children, we are implementing projects at primary and secondary level such as the PEDP-II and TQI, which are providing support to schools for making them inclusive for all.

Sultana focused on the roles of different development partners in regard to inclusive education: “The multilateral institutions like ADB, WB, UNICEF and JICA are funding various programmes and redefining the orientation of inclusive education in the country”.

The narratives of some participants suggest that there is controversy in prioritising local needs through donor supported projects. However, such projects may have the potential to positively accelerate the education experiences for children with disabilities. Responding to a question related to the impact of donor funded inclusive education projects, several participants expressed a mixed stance. Anis said:

In some cases, the donor funded project has a positive impact on educating the marginalised in Bangladesh, but in many case negative or neutral impacts are observed. The major weakness of donor funded projects are their limited scope. Projects usually have a limited timeframe and once the time is complete, donor funding stops and the support is withdrawn.

This concern about the limited timeline for donor projects was expressed by Akhter: “The World Bank funded the primary education project (PEDP-II project) which has targeted the introduction of inclusive education at primary level. This project has allocated a huge amount of money and primary reformation towards inclusive education is progressing rapidly. But what will be happen if the project is phased out?”.

Despite the seemingly good intention of donor organisations, Sultana raised the possible impact of external influences as an irony for Bangladesh policy initiatives. She acknowledged the influence of UNCRPD on Bangladesh inclusive education initiatives and said: “Despite a number of good intentions, the obvious result is complexity in practice, because the actual needs have not been well considered”. Focusing on the issue, another academic Tajim said: “The aim should not be just to *copy and paste* but to understand the needs and therein change the country’s policy for educating children with disabilities”.

Challenges for Bangladesh education system to be more inclusive

Although inclusive education is seen as an opportunity to realise the educational needs for all children, implementation is full of challenges (Sakiz, 2016). For example, Ceylan and Aral (2016) reported the challenges for inclusive education in Turkey as the following: experiencing effective teaching and learning activities, enrolling children with disabilities in school, and a lack of transportation for children to access schools. O’Rourke (2014) claimed that inclusive practices are successful for many students with special needs, but poorly communicated and understood educational strategy results in implementation challenges. The challenges for Bangladesh education system to be more inclusive are varied. Challenges are found in all aspects of providing educational support for children with disabilities, but the central challenge is *to ensure the qualitative changes within schools* as stated by Sultana. The following sections describes the challenges reported by the experts.

General challenges

A number of general challenges were identified by participants. Akhter suggested three prime challenges to effectively introducing inclusive education. These are: “community attitude, teachers’ attitude and non-inclusive infrastructure”. In contrast, Tajim stated what he perceived as key obstacles: “There are three major barriers we need to overcome on the way to inclusive education: social misunderstanding, non-readiness of

schools, and parents' unwillingness". In a similar way, Sultana identified that a lack of awareness in the community of teachers and administrators, as the main hurdles to achieving appropriate educational rights for children with disabilities. The existing social attitudes were also viewed as a challenge by several participants. Tahmida pointed her finger to the societal negligence towards disabilities, as she said: "Children with disabilities had been experiencing negligence in the society for a long period. This level of ignorance or negligence cannot be overcome quickly". Kabir supported this view: "Children with disabilities are not treated equally in most social contexts especially in remote rural areas". Zahir illustrated a general challenge from a parental perspective: "Because parents are not aware about their children's educational rights, they often fail to argue or to put pressure on schools to ensure an acceptable education for their children".

Major challenges presented by school practices

The analysis of narratives revealed many challenges to inclusive education are generated from existing school practices. These challenges are apparent before a child enters a school and also when a child has been enrolled and attending classes for many years. Tahmida said: "It seems that every step of schooling involves challenges for a child with a disability. The placement system, the school assessment system, and pedagogical practices are often not supportive for a child with a disability". Participants confirmed school-based problems faced by the students with disabilities. For example, Tajim claimed that accesses to information and Braille books for visually impaired students was inadequate. Similarly, Akhter said: "In most cases there is no ramp or lift to support movement for students with physical disabilities. There is also a lack of accessible toilets". Furthermore, Sultana said that schools could not ensure vital assistive devices such as hearing aids were available.

Lack of school-based support

Focusing on the importance of school-based support system, Tajim said: "We know that a strong school-based support system is required to ensure effective inclusive education. Support for children with disabilities, for their teachers and their parents, should be available for implementing inclusive education". On the other hand, Sultana said: "Most of the schools have a shortage of teaching staff. Therefore, teachers usually have excessive class sizes. This makes it difficult for teachers to ensure their teaching

is inclusive to all”. In this regards, Syed said: “Unfortunately, most schools have no scope of getting support for teaching children with disabilities”.

Limited entry to top-ranked schools

Several participants acknowledged the discrepancies regarding admission and enrollment as a challenge for including children with disabilities into the mainstream secondary schools. The overwhelming competition for gaining admission to the perceived top schools appears to be resulting in exclusion of children with disabilities. To minimise the internal discrepancies in education for children with disabilities, Zahir suggested opening up the top ranked schools for children with disabilities. He explained his idea as follows:

To date, there are many schools in Bangladesh that place obstacles in the way of children with disabilities. For example, most of the top ranked schools in Dhaka and other regions of the country do not encourage children with disabilities to enrol.

Critiquing the admission system, Zahir also said:

They (top-ranked schools) technically exclude children with disabilities through their entrance test requirements. About ten times more candidates apply, than the actual positions available, for admission to these schools.

Tahmida reported that it was very difficult for children with disabilities in the so-called good secondary schools. According to her, the primary concern of those schools was to maintain high levels of examination success. Therefore, they always chose better students and excluded children with disabilities through the use of competitive admission tests. Pointing to the importance of including children with disabilities in these top-ranked schools for advancing inclusive education, Mahmuda stated: "We have to be aware of the equality of opportunities. If we could convince these good schools to admit a few children with disabilities, it could make a difference". Zahir concluded with his suggestions that the Government policy should be robust enough to force the schools to enrol a certain percentage of disabled students. Anis reported that they had introduced a school admission policy which stipulated the reservation of a certain number of seats for children with disabilities. However, the top-ranked schools often ignored this quota system.

Resource constraints and large class size

Limited resources and large class sizes were two areas of concern expressed by participants. Zahir stated: “The major concern for implementing inclusive education is the insufficient allocation of resources”. Similarly, Sultana admitted the resource constraints to promote inclusive education in the secondary schools:

The existing support system is not well organised, and resource allocations are very limited. The current resource allocation for educating children with disabilities is from the Ministry of Social Welfare. Interestingly, the majority is allocated not for promoting inclusive education but for targeting an expansion of special education.

Focusing on teaching demands in the classroom, Syed said: “Teachers in mainstream classrooms are overwhelmed with immense class sizes and are able to pay minimum attention to children with disabilities”. Portraying the challenges for schools Zahir said: “Still most of the schools have problems with the large class size and unsupportive furniture”. Akhter further added: “Due to the large class sizes, consisting of 60 to 70 students, it is challenging for teachers to keep their focus on teaching to individual’s needs especially children with disabilities”. Tajim added: “Schools are facing difficulties in taking measures to equip classrooms with disability friendly furniture”.

Challenges related to the teaching and learning

Information from participants suggested that most of the teachers were struggling to achieve the goal of inclusive education through their teaching strategies. In this regards, Tajim said: “Trying to live a double life as a teacher makes things complicated. An inclusive teacher supporting students with disabilities and as a teacher who is striving to ensure the success of all his/her students”. Several participants mentioned that, in many cases, they found teachers resistant to teaching children with disabilities. Syed described that he found several teachers who were denying support for children with disabilities, as those teachers perceived disabilities as a burden on their teaching and learning activities. A similar theme was reported by Tajim: “Modifying teaching-learning strategies according to the inclusive philosophies is creating numerous pressures on mainstream teachers”. Focusing on the primary challenge for the teachers, Zahir reported that most children with disabilities needed individualised instruction rather than exam-oriented instruction in the classroom. Changing the teaching focus towards individualised instruction appeared as a key challenge for teachers.

Challenges to the balance between educational efficiency and equity

Professionals' narratives reflected that seeking a balance between educational efficiency and equity was creating challenges. Pointing to school culture, Tahmida said: "Challenges arise from a school's vibrant culture of measuring teachers' efficiency by students' test performance". It is reflected from several conversations that the over emphasis on test results was creating a challenge for inclusive education. Sultana reported teachers were mostly focusing on issues related to students' examination success. Syed echoed this observation: "A teacher's experiences could vary, but still there is a unique aspect of their teaching that is for the academic success of students. To some extent, it seems contradictory with inclusion". Sultana added that teachers were providing more attention to preparing their students for upcoming public examinations. Student grades have become a standard against which to assess teacher quality. Tajim explained that such a tendency was opposite to the philosophy of inclusive education because inclusive education expects that the pedagogy would be on the basis of equity so that all children would get the support needed to learn.

Tajim mentioned that the emergence of uneven competition among secondary schools presented a barrier for children with disabilities. He said: "Too much emphasis on examinations is pushing disabled students into an uneven competition. Achieving good grades in the examination is the focus of many students at secondary level". Syed explained: "In many cases, children with disabilities will achieve lower than average marks. Children may also experience frustration because it is difficult for them to follow the exam-oriented teaching and learning practices".

Non-supportive assessment system

Criticising the existing evaluation system, one expert said: "In fact, the assessment system that has existed for a long time from primary to tertiary levels is too traditional and is not supportive for nourishing students' intellectual development or creativity". A similar view was expressed by Zahir:

In most cases, the assessment system is focused on written examinations and is summative in nature. Formative feedback is often ignored. There is a significant lack of information. It is not possible to identify their developmental level in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

In support, Tajim argued: "It would be unrealistic to assess progress of children with disability who have sensory or intellectual impairments using the traditional school assessment system".

Challenges to accessibility and public transport

The participants identified inaccessible infrastructure as a challenge for implementing inclusive education in Bangladesh. They also admitted that ensuring accessibility for children with disabilities consistent with the policy was a difficult task. In this regards, Kabir said: "Developing a disability friendly public transport system will be challenging. The existing system is failing to serve the general population, how could it help persons with disabilities". Syed said: "Getting on board a bus for a wheelchair user is an unrealistic dream". In connection, Ajmal said:

Our system does not allow persons with disabilities move independently. In reality, when a disabled person would like to move from one place to another by public transport, it is impossible, even though the policy advocates for an accessible transportation system.

Characterizing the features of such challenges, Mahmuda said:

Massive traffic jams, a remote public transport system, and crowded footpaths compound the problems for students with disabilities who want to attend school, college or universities. Needless to say, this negatively influences their educational participation.

Focusing on mainstream schools, Syed said: "Most of the children with disabilities experience inaccessible environment, especially with stairs and toilets". Anis stated: "We have not yet constructed ramps in every school, but we are trying".

Alike the above, Zahir claimed that the policy of making the building infrastructure accessible was not practiced in reality. He explained: "It is quite difficult to implement building codes and accessibility rules. Most of the buildings are not accessible, and yet there are no initiatives underway to make them accessible.

Lack of coordinated efforts in policy implementation

A need for collaboration and coordination between government departments was highlighted as an area of need to ensure the implementation of inclusive education policies. Anis reported this as a critical issue stating there was a lack of cooperation and coordinated effort for ensuring inclusion of children with disabilities. He reported that many of the Ministries were directly involved in the support of persons with disabilities,

and they were (individual Ministries) positive in recognising the rights of persons with disabilities, however each Ministry was working independently of each other. He stated that despite active efforts from various people, no significant improvement towards inclusion could be seen. Then he commented on the slower implementation of the policy related to education and disabilities, “It is due to not having any coordinated effort among Ministries and government departments. It’s like the Scratch mustard. All initiatives magnificent, but who is, to put the bell on the cat?”

In response to a question about the inter-Ministry coordination and cooperation, Akhter described existing animosities about implementing inclusive education. He illustrated the example of ‘Disability Service and Support Centre’ that were established by the government to develop country-wide services for persons with disabilities. He claimed 103 ‘*Disability Service and Support Centres*’ were operating around the country however with little connection with local schools. Similarly, all public medical college hospitals have established specialised centres to provide services for children with disabilities and their families, but without connections or supports for classroom teachers.

Many INGOs, NGOs and universities are working and conducting research in the field of disability and development with a particular focus on education. Unfortunately, much of this work done in isolation or disconnected from each other without inter-exchange of experiences. Some Ministries such as Social Welfare, Education, Primary and Mass Education, and Children’s and Women’s Affairs, along with many NGOs and INGOs directly operate education programmes for children with disabilities. Akhter claimed that the lack of cooperation and coordination reduces the effectiveness of initiatives. He said: “Organisations work by themselves following their independent approaches with no logical coherence between one-another. The results of these interventions end up overlapping, ignorant and inappropriate”. He further stated that inclusion initiatives must be adjusted to meet the needs of the end user. Therefore, a national-level programme focused on need-based support should be provided.

Grounded realities

Tajim reported gaps between the realities of Bangladesh communities and schools and policy expectations. He stated:

Despite the intention of policies, the reality is different. Education for children with disabilities is still far behind that of their non-disabled peers. They face

obstacles at every step. There are no practical solutions to minimise these barriers in the various educational initiatives available.

Several other participants also expressed concerns about the mismatch between policies and realities. The following sections examine the grounded realities of inclusive education in the context of Bangladesh secondary education as reported by participants.

Existence in policy - nonexistence in reality: An implementation problem

This section illustrates the grounded realities of the existing situation of Bangladesh inclusive education in terms of policies and practices. During the professional conversations, Tajim claimed that any problems observed in practice were due to issues in the implementation of policies. He reported:

We have adequate policy provision, but teachers have not received training to embrace inclusive education. To motivate children with disabilities and their families, the Government introduced a quota system for employment of persons with disabilities. To get employment, persons with disabilities must pass secondary education, but if children do not get access to a congenial environment for their secondary education then the quota system is of no use.

Responding to a question of relating policy with practice, Sultana reflected the reality of policy translation into practices by stating an old Bangla proverb. *The account of Kazi's cows is only available in books, but not in reality.* Then she explained that this proverb was a more eloquent way of describing how policies were implemented. According to Sultana, in most cases policies are enacted to align with global expectation, with little subsequent effort to convert into practices. She then provided an example from the constitution that advocates for a non-discriminatory unilateral education system, but in practice 11 different types of primary school exist within the system, contrary to the constitutional commitment (e.g., Bangla instruction, English instruction, British-based English medium, two religious Madrash-based school approach). Sultana added, “In the case of inclusive education, by ratifying the convention [UNCRPD], we have committed to introducing inclusive education at all levels of the school system, but we can't overlook the fact that our reality reflects our limited ability to do it”.

Darkness remains underneath the lamp

Several participants reported internal discrepancies as specific challenges of policy implementation linked with grounded realities. The senior academic, Tajim, listed four points of discrepancy between policy and practices. He described there as the *darkness underneath the lamp*. These points were:

- i) Limited scope for the education of students with sensory impairments (i.e., children who are deaf and/or blind);
- ii) Limited academic fields of study available for students with disabilities. It appeared that students were able to study in the Arts or Humanities. However, it seems that the science and commerce were not available;
- iii) The lack of Ministry of Education involvement in supporting students with disabilities. The education for the disabled is a responsibility of the Ministry of Social Welfare; and,
- iv) The limited examination support available for students with disabilities. For example, only junior students could utilise an examination reader-writer. Although students are entitled to an extra 30 minutes in the public examination, some children may benefit from more.

Overcoming challenges to cross the Styx of education

The conversations with Tajim, Sultana and Akhter highlighted the grounded realities and illustrated the challenges for implementing inclusive education at both the micro level [child perspective] and the macro level [policy implementation aspects] level. Sultana compared the process with the tale from Greek mythology about crossing the Styx²⁹. She stated that a child with a disability needs to climb the stairs of challenges in order to cross the Styx (access inclusive education). The challenges might begin soon after the birth with recognition that the child is different or had difficulties developing. These challenges are related to parents' emotional journeys from early feelings of grief through to gradual acceptance and understanding. Challenges can also be present when a child enrolls in a mainstream school and experiences discrimination. For example, parents of non-disabled children may not want their child spending time in the presence of a disabled child. Teachers may respond negatively due to their limited capacity to support children with diverse needs. For example, if the child had a hearing impairment,

²⁹ In Greek mythology, Styx is a deity and a river that forms the boundary between Earth and the Underworld.

teachers need to be acquainted with sign language. In the case of mild intellectual disabilities, teachers need to know about the different behavioural patterns.

A disconnection between secondary and tertiary education

Several participants argued that links between universities and schools could be an effective route by which to improve the provision of inclusive education. Consistent with this view, several participants focused on increasing access to tertiary education for children with disabilities after their secondary education. Zahir stated: “Secondary education creates a bridge between primary and tertiary, initiatives to increase access to tertiary institutions could positively influence the presence of children with disabilities in secondary schools”. Ajmal also recommended initiatives for children with disabilities to access a university education: “Enrolments of children with disabilities at the tertiary level are relatively small, but measures are being taken to increase their presence”. Several participants raised the issue of reforming the tertiary education system in order to support inclusive education at the secondary level. Tajim stated: “Tertiary institutions should consider reformation in line with inclusive education. I have found that any positive changes occurring at the tertiary level have an influence on secondary education”.

Ways forward: Recommended strategies of implementing inclusive education in Bangladesh secondary schools

All experts interviewed provided their opinion on what Bangladesh needs to consider in order to successfully implement inclusive education. Responding to a question about potential immediate measures could be taken to ensuring inclusive education for children with disabilities in secondary school, the participants reported different views. For example, Syed stated:

If I had the authority, I would execute the Reformation to establish a unitary system of education according to the Constitutional commitment. Every citizen would get the chance to receive the same quality education. Furthermore, I would remove all the obstacles in the current admission procedures. [Syed, TE]
We need to ensure two things: mass awareness and effective teacher training. [Ajmal, IN]

A mechanism should be established to ensure the effective participation of parents in educating children with disabilities. [Tajim, AC1]

An alternative system of assessment needs to be introduced which will be more focused on activities and development rather than on writing skills. [Tahmida, AS]

These responses reflect that Bangladesh's move towards inclusive education needs to consider a diverse range of issues. The participants recommended that without the cooperation of stakeholders, the goals of inclusive education would not be realised. Ajmal said, "National and local level dialogues could be organised with concerned people to facilitate inclusion of children with disabilities in education, and also coordinated efforts are needed in all rural and urban developmental schemes".

Several participants stated a need to focus on successful examples of the implementation of inclusive education. Sultana said: "We have many success stories, and we need to develop inclusive education models based on these stories". Similarly, Kabir said: "We need to highlight the success stories about how students with disabilities are making excellent progress in education". He also stated his belief that focusing on practical steps rather than discussing the problems was a path forwards. Sultana agreed when she said:

We became frustrated with the enormous problems involved in providing inclusive education. We have had little discussion on a *way forward*, and have had a limited focus on the *success stories*. We often overlook the positives that already exist.

Tajim recommended decentralisation of the national curriculum in order to support local flexibility needed to support children with disabilities. In response, Zahir said: "In our context decentralisation of curriculum framework would either not be possible or realistic. Therefore, we need to rethink how children with disabilities could best be served under the existing curriculum framework".

The participants agreed that strengthening existing teacher development initiatives was important to supporting inclusive education. According to Mahmuda, a policy maker, the Principal task of ensuring inclusive education for children with disabilities is to prepare teachers. Along similar lines, Anis expressed: "without an upgraded teacher education mechanism, it is unrealistic to expect a change in the system". As a rebuttal to this point, Syed stated that shifts in educators' knowledge, skills, and attitudes, were prerequisite for inclusive education in the secondary schools. He further argued that only through training could teachers develop the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The need for increased public expenditure was raised by several participants. Tajim opinion included:

Although the Government's development plans place the highest priority on education...the allocation to education is the lowest in the South Asian region. Therefore, we need to increase investment in education, especially for inclusive education, if we want to move forward.

To overcome resource constraints, several participants suggested mobilisation of community resources. Kabir suggested: "Although inclusive education is a Government-driven agenda, community level teamwork and cooperation could promote inclusive education in secondary schools". Ajmal provided an example:

Some NGOs in association with some INGOs are now piloting models of inclusive education through their development projects. A similar project is starting in 50 primary schools from different regions. As a result, locally-supported and sourced resources such as mobility ramps, assistive devices and teaching aids are being put in place.

Several participants reported that a mixture of inclusive and special education could be the best model for educating children with disabilities in Bangladesh. Akhter claimed:

Inclusive education has many strengths and weaknesses, but is also very unpredictable in our context and doesn't fit the traditional classroom setting. My gut feeling is that inclusive education needs to be balanced with traditional expectations and should be developed slowly.

Similarly, Sultana said: "In my mind, inclusion with the support of special education fits the Bangladesh context. Despite our commitment to full inclusion, parents still prefer specialised education for their disabled children".

Several participants expressed a need to completely reform the Bangladesh education system in order to align with the philosophy of inclusive education. For example, Tajim stated: "Considering the depth and diversity of needs of children with disabilities, it is essential to bring an all-out effort including the structural expansion, reformation and/or modification of the current education system". Zahir expressed a similar view:

A deeper understanding of inclusive education helps me realise that the Government should come forward with some unpleasant but necessary steps, like breaking down the centralised nature of the education system. The system must be flexible and responsive to the diverse needs of learners.

Addressing the conceptual barrier

The need to understand and address conceptual barriers to inclusive education was described by several experts. This was illustrated by Tajim who stated:

Due to the dominance of the medical and welfare perspectives in our minds, children with disabilities are often excluded from opportunities to express their concerns. ... When their issues are considered from a rights-based perspective, the scenario changes.

The participants also suggested that conceptual barriers included negative or traditional attitudes. As Ajmal stated:

There is no doubt about the capacity of the Bangladesh system, but a primary concern remains to support children with disabilities who live in remote villages. Many villages are still dominated by superstition. Disability is still viewed as a consequence of an evil deed of a parent.

Action needed to implement the policy

Participants were asked what action should be taken immediately in order to implement effective inclusive education. Several participants raised the issue of bureaucratic processes. Zahir described education for children with disabilities overseen by the Ministry of Social Welfare as a fallacy. He firmly believed that the Ministry of Education must take responsibility for children with disabilities. Tajim focused on the reluctance of the Ministry of Education to implement policies to provide inclusive education for children with disabilities. Tajim also criticised the over emphasis on increasing the quantity, rather than the quality of education. He stated: “Recent efforts to increase the enrolment rate of children with disabilities in mainstream education has created issues related to quality, relevance, and parity”. To ensure quality, Zahir suggested: “Schools and classrooms may need to change into more flexible, resourceful and humane systems that not only benefit children with disabilities but all children”.

Discussion and conclusion

The interviews with policymakers, academics, and government administrators illustrated a gap between the aspirations expressed in government policies designed to support children with disabilities and the practices taking place in schools. In most conversations, the participants expressed that the expectations inherent in the policies were beyond what was possible in reality. Several participants claimed that inclusive

education in Bangladesh was supported by words and not by actions. The reports suggested that existing policies relating to education and disabilities were, at times, contradictory. Preparing schools and teachers to embrace inclusive education was identified as a significant challenge. Appropriate and consistent policy formulation and system- and school-wide implementation are required to overcome this barrier. The data also showed that a lack of appropriate resources was a significant barrier to inclusion. Mainstream schools often lacked facilities and basic teaching aids, including classroom space, toilets, drinking water, blackboards, and chalk.

The current culture of Bangladesh education focuses on competition and increasing standards. This creates a challenge for successfully implementing inclusive education. Most participants believed that the goals of inclusive education for children with disabilities need to be redefined. Pushing to include children with disabilities in an environment involving competition may further exclude them from education. In a recent Korean study of inclusive education policies and practices, Kim (2013) suggested transforming the existing school culture from a competition-driven system to a more cooperative and human-centered one in order to support the inclusion of students with special needs.

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argued that public policies were once exclusively developed within national settings, but now are also located within a global *system* (p.2). Therefore, it is essential to strike a balance between local and global expectations. The findings affirmed that inclusive education in Bangladesh was largely the result of a donor-supported agenda. However, various internal actors such as humanitarian activists also contributed to the process. The spirit of disability rights movement in Bangladesh has also been accelerated by the influence of the UNCPRD. Therefore, Bangladesh has adopted these global directives into local policies. Regardless of the global influences, inclusive education for children with disabilities should be contextualised with the needs of children, their families and the communities of Bangladesh.

Finally, the above analyses indicate the Bangladesh's government intention to develop an inclusive education system for all students – including those with disabilities. However, altering the practices that determine whether a policy is implemented is more complex than writing and disseminating a policy. Many important challenges appear to be arising as the policy is executed. The analysis of professional conversations data suggested clustering the narratives into under categories. Such as contextualising

inclusive education, aspirations or intentionality, grounded realities and recommended strategies to move forward.

On the basis of the accounts provided by the experts about their perceptions and experiences of inclusive education policy and practice, the following diagram (figure 16) could be drawn to represent different aspects of inclusive education initiatives in Bangladesh. These are supportive of understanding the foreground and debates within inclusive education policy in Bangladesh, and such issue-based discussions lead to the final Chapter: Discussion and Conclusion.

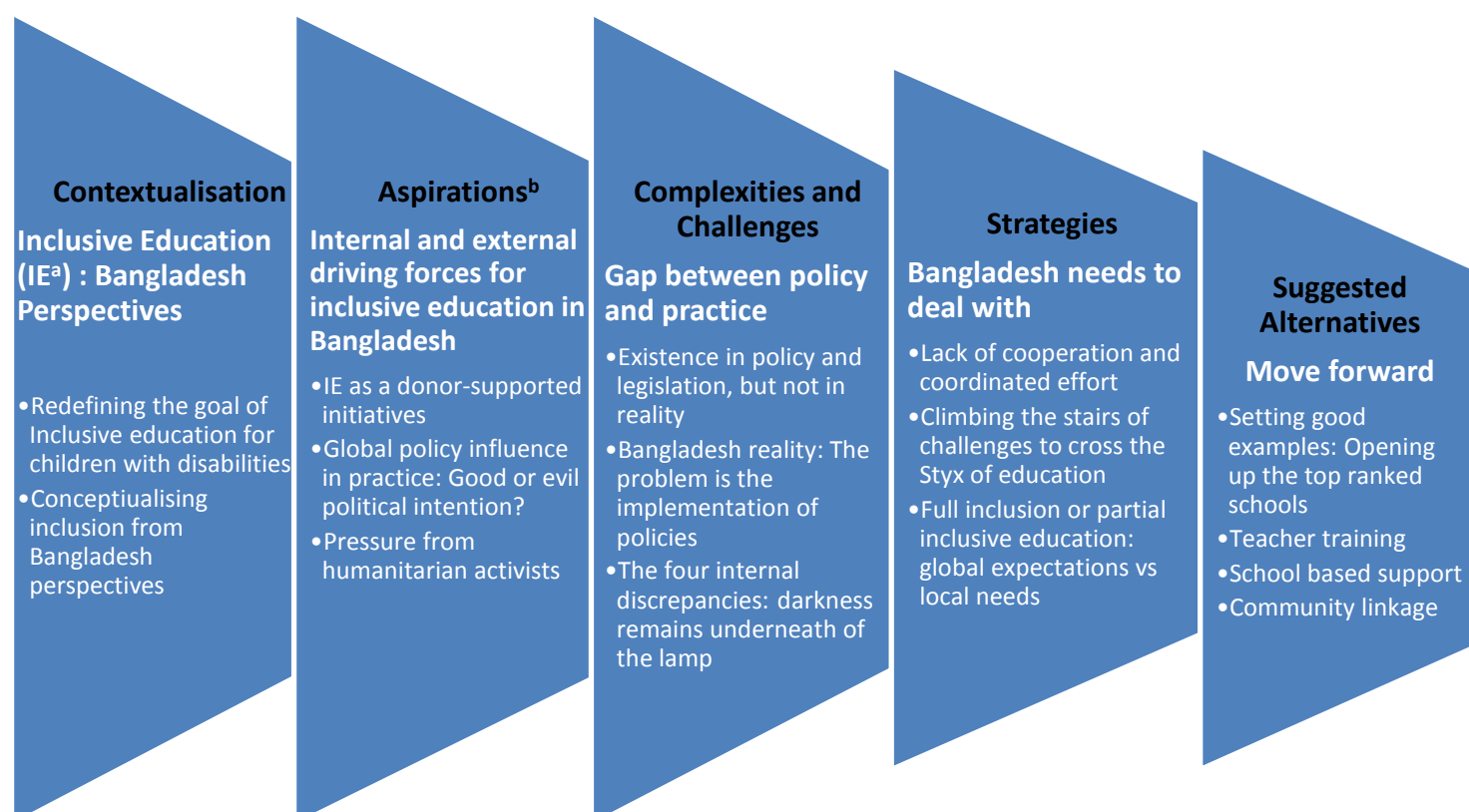


Figure 16. Overview of inclusive education movement in Bangladesh

Note: ^aIE denotes inclusive education; ^b figure 15 presents detailed on 'Internal and external sources of aspirations'.

Chapter Eleven

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter draws together the final theorising of the study's findings and outlines possible implications for policies and practices of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Bangladesh secondary schools. The chapter provides responses to the five research questions by considering the overarching themes from school cases and by summarising the key issues related to policy and practices.

Themes from the school cases

This section summarises the key findings of the five school cases that are presented in the chapters five to nine. The following eight recurring themes emerged from these school cases: i) Inclusive education is hard to do with large numbers of students in a class; ii) teachers have not been trained in inclusive education; iii) a lack of resources is limiting teachers; iv) there is confusion about identifying students with disabilities; v) tension exist between the claims and perspectives of principals and teachers; vi) the dominance of examinations limits schools' ability to practice inclusion; vii) parental engagement is complicated by social values; and, viii) embedded religious, social and ethnic values influence inclusion. The following discussions of these themes summarise the current challenges in existing inclusive education practices in Bangladesh secondary schools.

Inclusive education is hard to do with large numbers of students in a class

The school cases highlighted the difficulties teachers reported in practising inclusive education in classes with large numbers of students. An intrinsic tension related to class sizes was observed among teachers who believed they would have to choose between teaching *for the majority* or for *individuals with disability*. Teachers were unsure who to give their attention to: students with disabilities or a majority of students without disabilities. However, Morton, Rietveld, Guerin, McIlrory and Duke (2012) argued that inclusive education involves being accustomed to teaching for all students in a classroom and yet "teachers need to know their students as individuals" (p.270). Class sizes made it difficult for teachers in this study to understand the needs of children with disabilities. For example, teachers reported "I can't focus on only those students", 'I don't discriminate among students while I teach'; "I have to finish the syllabus within

limited school hours”. When presented with a class with many students, teachers were less likely to be aware of or attend to the needs of individual students with a disability. Similarly, the need for teachers to support so many students limited their ability to create an equitable learning environment. Garcia and Guerra (2004) argued that deconstruction of deficit thinking of teachers is essential to create an equitable learning atmosphere. In this regard, Erb (2010) emphasised the need for a philosophical transformation of teaching and learning focusing on the language of *We* to optimise learning for all students.

Observation data revealed that most classrooms in the participant schools had an average of 70 students, and allocated time for a single teaching period of 30 to 45 minutes. Most teachers in group interviews reported that it was hard for them to understand and meet the needs of all students within this limited time. For example, the head teacher of Dhaka Damayanti High School assumed that spending more time focused on children with disabilities meant non-disabled students would be disadvantaged. Similarly, the Principals of Megawati Adarsha High School, and Ttajasbita School and College argued that their teachers had to teach their planned tasks within the short lesson time and that teachers must complete the syllabus within the limited number of classes in an academic year. This appeared to contribute to teachers’ perceptions that the presence of children with disabilities was problematic and added to the uncertainty involved in meeting their syllabus obligations for such large numbers of students. This difficulty is not limited to Bangladesh, with similar tensions reported in Persson’s (2008) exploration of Swedish school experiences. Teachers and principals reported practice difficulties due to a conflict between a striving for inclusion and the difficulties involved adapting learning environments during everyday classroom instruction.

Bangladesh secondary teachers also reported that the large class sizes affected the pace and focus of their teaching. Several reported that they spent significant time attempting to manage students’ behaviour. For example, a mathematics teacher, Amina, at Dhaka Damayanti High School stated the presence of a child with a disability disrupted her class. Similarly, Rubina (assistant head teacher at Megawati Adarsha High School) recognised that her teachers had difficulty taking care of every student in their classrooms. Rubina reported that inclusion imposed heavy demands on teachers with the need to guard against bullying of students with disabilities. These findings are

similar to those reported in a Turkish study reported by Sucuoglu, Akalin and Sazak-Pinar (2010). They found that teachers had serious difficulties managing inclusive classrooms partly due to class sizes. In a study of Saudi Arabian primary schools, Almulla (2015) discussed the impact of the number of students per class on teachers' perceptions and practices. They suggested that large class sizes restricted teachers' use of effective student-centred teaching, as much of the teachers' focus and energies was spent for on non-teaching activities such as managing students' behaviour and assessing their performance.

The school cases also highlighted positive practices in which teachers' utilised strategies to cater for large groups of students. For example, Monkui (Basanti Model High School) reported looking for contextual solutions to better support the inclusion of children with disabilities in his large class. He introduced specific strategies such as co-operative group learning approaches in his class. This included engaging all children, including children with disabilities, in classroom activities through group and individual work, and assignment activities. Reducing class sizes is likely to be expensive as it may require additional teachers and facilities (Lewit & Baker, 1997). Considering the resource limitations in Bangladesh, this study suggests that further research is needed to identify effective and evidence-based solutions that successfully include children with disabilities in large secondary school classrooms.

Teachers have not been trained in inclusive education

Most teachers interviewed in this study expressed positive attitudes about teaching students with disabilities. However, they were not sure how to do it. A majority of teachers reported doubt about their knowledge and ability to address the need of students with disabilities in their classrooms. Many were even unaware of the term and phenomenon of *inclusive education* and its specification in Bangladesh education policies. Jorgensen and Lambert (2012) claimed that often teachers struggle with identifying and supporting meaningful participation for all students in an inclusive classroom. Most of the school cases revealed that teachers had sympathy or empathy towards students with disabilities, but did not understand their personal or educational needs. An unintentional constraint of limited teacher knowledge is the potential to unconsciously focus on all students, and not focus enough or ignore the participation of students with disabilities. In fact, such practices could result in students with disabilities attending school and receiving little meaningful or effective support for their

learning and development, as reported by Shanti (student with a disability presented in Chapter Five).

This lack of awareness and confidence reported by teachers appeared to be underpinned by a lack of training. For inclusive education to develop and flourish, teacher training in how to help students with disabilities succeed in mainstream environments is necessary (Johnstone, 2010). It is evident from teachers' interviews that there was a limited focus on disability and inclusion in the secondary teacher training initiatives provided in Bangladesh. Although most teachers had attended pre-service and subject-based in-service training programmes, these did not focus on inclusive education. As a result, teachers were confused about taking responsibility for children with disabilities in their classroom. This is consistent with Pijl's (2010) finding that Dutch teachers were unsure about accepting responsibility for students with disabilities in their regular classrooms due to their limited knowledge about teaching students with special needs. In the current study, teachers raised several concerns about supporting students with disability. These included managing behaviour of some students with intellectual disabilities, protecting children with disabilities from being bullied in the classroom, gaining responses from some children with disabilities, stimulating children's learning, engaging children with disabilities into the classroom activities especially in group work, communicating with children with hearing impaired, and assessing progress of children with disabilities. These are all areas in which specialised training is likely to support teachers' confidence and skills.

Several teachers who reported receiving training about inclusive education also described difficulties they had implementing this knowledge in their classroom due to contextual barriers. For example, in a group interview, Halima, an assistant teacher at Megawati Adarsha High School stated that training was not enough unless there was support to implement the training back at the school. Orchard and Winch (2015) support this claim by stating that training should be contextualised. Several teachers also suggested that school administrators had insufficient knowledge to support them in this endeavour. In addition, fixed furniture, crowded classrooms, excessive class loads, limited teaching time, a lack of teaching aids, and restricted access to modern technology were reported as contextual barriers to implementing training in school. Despite the general challenges as mentioned above, some schools demonstrated ways to resolve the issue of teachers' development. For example, Basanti Model High School

had developed a contextual teacher development approach without incurring additional expenditure, and Megawati Adarsha High School established a platform for teachers to share experiences.

A lack of resources is limiting teachers

A consistent theme across the school cases was the lack of resources available for schools to support students with disabilities. Most of the participants recognised the need for schools to change their infrastructure in order to provide access for students with disabilities. To be inclusive, schools should also provide learning experiences for all children according to their needs irrespective of their abilities or disabilities (Foreman, 1996). Most participants in the school cases agreed that resources to support inclusion were limited or unavailable. This included funding, specialist teaching, relevant learning materials and training opportunities for staff. This lack of resourcing is likely to hinder schools' implementation of inclusive education (Okongo, Ngao, Rop & Nyongesa, 2015).

Meijie (2001) argued that the degree of inclusive education provided by schools was influenced by teachers' attitude towards students with disabilities as well as the knowledge of strategies and resources to support teaching (i.e., teaching methods, materials, availability of instruction time, and professional development opportunities). Several schools reported specific strategies to overcome resource constraints for their development. For example, Megawati Adarsha High School created a support service for students and teachers which seemed insufficient compared to the actual requirement. Similarly, several schools reported establishing links with local communities in an effort to increase their resource base (see chapters 5 and 6).

There is confusion about identifying students with disabilities

Teachers in this study reported that the identification and diagnosis of disabilities was a challenging aspect of inclusive education. In some case it appeared that schools did not know about student's disabilities or their needs resulting from their disabilities. As a result, staff were unable to meaningfully assess students to help identify their learning needs and to support decision making to facilitate their learning. However, In the *World Report on Disability*, it was acknowledged the importance of exploring the prevalence and patterns of disability to support the development of systematic interventions at a state level (WHO & WB, 2011).

As a result of the absence of standard identification and diagnostic tools, most teachers made casual judgements about students' disabilities. Participants from multiple schools reported they understood sensory or physical disabilities easily (i.e., physical, hearing, or vision). However, they had difficulty understanding less visible disabilities such as intellectual, learning, dyslexia, dysgraphia, autism and others neuro-developmental disabilities. This finding is consistent with Susan (2003) who argued that most moderate disabilities are often not visible or easily diagnosed in developing countries.

Teachers reported attempts to identify students with disabilities using observations, school records and even test results. In some case this appears to have resulted in teachers assuming that students who experienced mild or moderate difficulty learning new information had disabilities (e.g., see Chapter Eight). This raises an interesting question: are all *learning difficulties* a *disability*? It seems that every child is likely to experience difficulty learning new concepts or skills at some stage in their development, so potentially could every child experience a *disability*? Stakes and Hornby (1996, p.7) categorised the reasons for learning difficulties among students into seven areas: academic work; school record; intellectual characteristics; physical appearance; social factors; emotional factors; and family background. Students are also likely to be disadvantaged by the nature of any assessment task presented to determine their ability in each of these areas of learning and development, for example, a student who had difficulty attending to spoken information during a test designed to determine intellectual ability.

Tension exists between the claims and perspectives of principals and teachers

During school visits, it was common to observe a level of disagreement between the head teachers and teachers in regard to inclusive education. Most head teachers perceived inclusion as an opportunity to include all children in school. In contrast, teachers generally reported inclusion as problematic, because of their limited understanding and limited support available. Most teachers' perceptions were consistent with Hegarty (2001), who claimed that many educators and policymakers experienced inclusive education as problematic because of teachers' limited understanding of how to teach everyone, head teachers tended to be more eager to state their adherence to national policy.

The findings also showed that schools were gradually increasing their awareness of, and shifting their focus towards developing inclusive education. These changes were happening, despite an apparent lack of preparation and resources. The dominant influence of government policy appeared to underlie principals' stated confidence in implementing inclusive education. Principals readily presented stories of how their schools were welcoming children with disabilities. Conversely, teachers stated different opinions, as they were facing many difficulties in aligning their practices with inclusive education. In most schools, there was a recurring contrast between what head teachers were stating and what teachers reported occurring in the classroom. This inconsistency could be at least partially due to the power structures within the schools.

Across the schools, head teachers were observed to hold power in mostly authoritarian structures. For example, the incident of the head teacher of Shibani Pilot Girl's High School taking over the class indicated the principal's perception of supremacy in the school. Such imbalance in the power structure could be a major challenge for inclusion initiatives in Bangladesh. Real or perceived power imbalances could easily distort democratic values and participation needed for inclusive education to flourish (Wals, 2010).

The dominance of examinations limits schools' ability to practice inclusion

Inclusive education focuses on establishing social justice and democratic values (Artiles, Harris-Murri, & Rostenberg, 2006; Gerrard, 1994; Mitchell, 2014; Moberg & Savolainen, 2003; Slee, 2001). However, the data from schools revealed an issue about the focus of the secondary school system in Bangladesh. Were schools preparing students with social and democratic values to support their future life, or were they attempting to create students who could perform well in public examinations? Or was some middle-ground being sought? Many teachers appeared to be trying to accommodate inclusive education philosophies in their teaching. However, several principals expressed that maintaining school standards based on examination performances were more important than the inclusive education initiatives.

For the past 20 years, global trends of *standard based reforms* in education are driving an achievement-focused system (Black-Hawkins et al., 2007, p.8-9). This drive to raise standards has placed pressure on schools to embrace competition for achievement based on examination results. This pressure also threatens the notion of inclusion. As a

consequence of focusing on increased examination scores, children with disabilities are often at an unfair disadvantage and in many cases pushed to the periphery. Nevertheless, two school cases provided examples of children with disabilities participating and achieving within the exam-dominated system. Shibani Pilot Girl's High School introduced free coaching and extra tutoring beyond school hours to support student's achievement in examinations. Additionally, Ttajasbita School and College had introduced many innovative practices to ensure the success of all students in the examination. These included the S-NET programme for closely monitor students' progress and providing learning support, and Tutor-71, a cloud-based academic support system available to students all days and hours. All these innovations were reported to have a significant impact on the academic progress of children with disabilities.

Parental engagement is complicated by social values

Teacher, Principal and parent participants in the school cases described the complexity of parental engagement with schools. Although it is clear that parents are an important to the inclusion processes for their children with disabilities, researchers showed that the effective parent involvement in the education of children with disabilities was one of the most critical factors in the triumph of inclusive schools (Hornby, 2011; Hornby & Witte, 2010). However, the school cases reflect that most schools were not actively engaging with parents. Recent work by Gore, et.al. (2016) explored how enhanced family support and school connectedness could accelerate school success for secondary students and could promote inclusion by resolving fear of participating and succeeding. The complexities of parental engagement included an unwillingness of some parents to discuss their children's disability, and the schools not taking steps to initiate effective communication processes with parents. This finding is consistent with those of a recent study in the Bangladesh context. Hasnat (2016) revealed that most parents felt uncomfortable approaching schools, as they were not provided with sufficient information about how they could be involved.

Teachers in several schools identified that the attitudes of parents and families were contributing to fear and stigma towards disabilities in wider society. As a result, many children with disabilities remained invisible in the education system and local communities. The knowledge and resources available to families had a significant impact on the education of their children with disabilities. The school cases also revealed that a lack of awareness, illiteracy and poverty contributed to problems in

developing partnerships between schools and children with disabilities. For example, a parent stated “Teachers knows better than us” when asked about his involvement in the education of his child with a disability.

For most schools in this study, the engagement of parents of children with disabilities appeared difficult. For example, Nishi’s story (see Chapter Six) showed that her parents had never been consulted by the school regarding her education. Collier, Keefe, and Hirrel (2015) argued that the school-family relationship is critical for positive teaching practices. Thus the limited participation of parents in the educational decisions made regarding their children with disabilities has potentially contributed to the teachers’ reluctance to include and support them. However, staff at Ttajasbita School and College reported an innovative use of technology to communicate with parents about their children's education.

Embedded religious, social and ethnic values influence inclusion

The experiences of students with disabilities at secondary school is undoubtedly influenced by the social, religious and ethnic values held by members of their community and wider society. For example, staff at Shibani Pilot Girl’s High School explained how the social and cultural context was shaped by a shared belief regarding children with disabilities. Teachers from Basanti Model High School also reflected that their practices of inclusive education were rooted in their ethnic cultural values. They reported that the sympathy they held for children with disabilities was likely to serve their Goddess. Indigenous values were evident in the support provided for students at Shibani Pilot Girl’s High School. Thus it became evident that religious belief and cultural practices had a range of influences, depending on their nature. That such beliefs have an influence is consistent with reports from Thailand. Vorapanya and Dunlap (2014) suggested that religious beliefs had an influence on the inclusion of persons with disabilities into Thai society. Arduin (2015) argued that inclusive education for children with disabilities was positively correlated with underlying societal values and its approaches. Inclusive education in turn may support the development of communities and society as it involves expanding school environments and re-thinking the potential and contribution of persons with disabilities (Sanagi, 2016). In this regard, inclusive education has been reported as “a way of thinking, a way of being, and a way of making decisions about helping everyone belong” (Causton-Theoharis, 2009, p.43).

Inclusive education policies and practices

This section presents the aspirations, challenges and possible strategies to implementing inclusive education in Bangladesh. These are based on the findings from the analysis of policy texts and interviews with people involved in creating and implementing inclusive education policies.

Aspirations of inclusive education in Bangladesh

The data from conversations with professionals revealed that Bangladesh policymakers were encouraged to introduce inclusive education as a priority reform agenda. This appears to be driven by international and national policies that insist on the provision of education for children with disabilities in mainstream schools. This finding is consistent with the international literature and research in developing countries. For example, Elder (2015) reported that inclusive education in Kenya was due mainly to international expectations. A similar scenario is evident in Thailand (Vorapanya & Dunlap, 2014), Bhutan (Schuelka, 2014), and in many other developing countries.

Interviewees also suggested the economic advantages of providing education for students with disability in mainstream schools. One factor they reported was the prohibitive costs involved in building dedicated special education facilities for children with disabilities. This suggests that a goal of inclusive education is to achieve *quantity*, potentially over-riding *quality*. However, several researchers argue that inclusion is more than placing children with disabilities in regular classrooms (Mittler, 2000; Mitchell, 2014; Odom, Buysse, & Soukakou, 2011).

This study has identified that Bangladesh has an abundance of policies to support inclusive education. However, analysis of these policies suggests there is a level of contradiction among some policies. The spirit of the liberation of the country provided the ethic of social justice and supported the philosophy of inclusion. For example, Bangladesh recently enacted legislation titled the *Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act* (RPPDA) to accomplish alignment with UNCRPD (UN, 2006) which promotes full inclusion. In contrast, Bangladesh's *Neuro-Developmental Disabilities Protection Trust Act* (NDDPTA) 2013 advocates for establishing special education schools for children with neurodevelopment disabilities. Interestingly, the *National Education Policy* (MoE, 2010) provides for a balanced approach in recognising both inclusive and special education contexts for educating children with disabilities.

Complexities and challenges of implementing policies

Several participants stated that Bangladesh policies and legislation related to inclusion were either ambiguous or overly ambitious in the goal of educating all children with disabilities. For example, the RPPDA (2013) stated the need for reasonable accommodation and accessibility for children with disabilities in schools. However, the policy did not include clear guidelines as to how resources would be allocated to achieve these aims. Participants were consistent in their concern about the lack of specific actions included in policies. The professional conversation data also revealed a potential tension between inclusive education policies and practices due to a mismatch between the aspirations of the policies and grounded realities within Bangladesh's schools and communities. According to participants, these challenges are closely associated with the socio-economic context and it might be seen as a result of the dominance of a deficit view of disability.

The challenges to be addressed in implementing inclusive education policies were identified as: community attitudes; teachers' attitudes; accessibility of infrastructure; social misunderstanding; preparedness of schools; parents' unwillingness; lack of awareness among administrators; large class sizes; limited resources; non-supportive assessment systems; rigid school admission systems; and lack of coordinated efforts in policy implementation. Finally, participants claimed that Bangladesh policies appeared idealistic in that they were clear re-iteration of international values. However, they further recognised that implementation of policies was more problematic than the policies. For example a senior academic stated, "Existence in the books, but nonexistence in reality".

Strategies for Bangladesh

According to participants, inclusive education in Bangladesh is in the initial stages of development. It was suggested that Bangladesh should work towards a goal of full inclusion over a period of time. For example, aiming to develop a parallel system of inclusive and special education could be a more realistic goal in the journey to full inclusion. According to Hornby (2014), the complexities in dealing with full inclusion has led to the notion of *responsible inclusion*. This recognises inclusive education as the co-existence of inclusive mainstream schools with a supportive special education provision for children with disabilities. Achieving inclusive education in practice will

require overcoming many challenges (Khan et.al., 2013). Several participants described how exclusionary practices had existed in secondary schools for an extended period of time and that any changes would take considerable time. Therefore, participants recommended contextualised strategies, with variable timeframes (i.e., short term, midterm and long term), to implement inclusive education.

Participants suggested several strategies that could be implemented relatively quickly with limited additional resourcing. These included public education and awareness-raising programmes to inform the general population about the abilities and needs of children with disabilities. A further strategy suggested was the introduction of an administrative monitoring system to reduce and eliminate schools' rejection of children with disabilities. Implementation of a nationwide teacher training programme focused on the fundamentals of inclusive teaching and learning was also recommended by participants.

Bangladesh government ministries were identified as working separately towards different aspects of inclusive education. Participants recommended the introduction of a co-ordinated effort from ministries and all relevant stakeholders. A key issue reported was the need for collaboration between the Ministries of Education and Social Welfare, with a view towards the Ministry of Education taking full responsibility for educating children with disabilities. Furthermore, participants argued for a change in planning processes to ensure that the limited resources available were utilised appropriately.

Recommended mid-term strategies included a holistic reformation of the education system according to Constitutional Article 17. Specifically, a mechanism for introducing provisions for *individualised education programmes* (IEPs) is needed. This is linked with the need for efficient devices and mechanisms to best support parents' participation in schools. Similarly, an assessment system that supports the learning needs of children with disabilities is also needed. Participants also suggested that an increasingly decentralised and flexible curriculum framework could further underpin inclusive education.

The development of research programmes to document teaching and administrative strategies that support inclusive education was identified as a relevant long-term strategy. This included exploring and highlighting successful examples of inclusive education policies and practices, and describing the successes experienced by students

with disabilities. Participants also argued that increased investment was needed in order schools to be truly accessible and appropriately resourced.

Alignment between aspirations and practice

Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou (2011) argued that both developed and developing countries perceived inclusive education is problematic due to the contested nature of inclusive education policies and practices. Most of the school cases illustrated that staff efforts in implementing inclusive education practice were often mismatched with the idealism of policies and the grounded realities in schools. Although practices in Bangladesh secondary schools exhibited some alignment with contemporary policies of inclusive education, many mismatches and challenges were also observed. The findings also revealed a growing impetus of management committees and school administrators in moving gradually towards inclusive education. Many challenges remain to be overcome. These include supporting teachers to develop their practices to align with the policy aspirations. Increasing access to individualised needs-based support for students in areas such as sign language, counselling or Braille was also identified as an ongoing challenge.

The school cases, as well as professional conversation data, highlighted several inherent weaknesses of existing inclusive education policies in Bangladesh. Teachers reported no awareness of the guidelines for practising inclusive education in secondary schools. As a result, practices varied considerably from teacher to teacher as well as from school to school. Although government policy advocates for *reasonable accommodation* for students with disabilities to address their learning needs in schools (RPDDA, 2013; UN, 2006), the question remains as to how schools can achieve this. Similarly, recent indicators of inclusive education in New Zealand suggest that it is the responsibility of the school and its staff “to adapt to the needs of the student – rather than ‘fit’ the student to their school and class” (ERO, 2015, p.32). Few schools in the current study reported modifying their practices to accommodate students with disabilities. For example, adoption of a modified examination system reported by Basanti Model High School and introduction of a school transportation systems by Ttajasbita School and College. Most schools had not made any changes in their regular activities to accommodate the students with disabilities. For example, Tania at Dhaka Damayanti High School had difficulties climbing stairs to access her classroom. Similarly, most schools were following the standard examination procedures set out in national curriculum

documents, which do not include adaptations or flexibility for children with disabilities. Therefore there is a need to introduce school-based assessment systems that support the celebration of progress by students with disabilities.

Implications

This section describes the possible implications of findings and discusses these from the perspective of policy formation and teaching-learning practices. The results suggest that inclusion is to a limited extent present in some Bangladesh secondary schools, but more clarity is needed about appropriate support required for teachers and children with disabilities. The implications for future research to support implementation of inclusive education are also outlined.

Policy implications

The findings suggest that there are no specific guidelines for implementing inclusive education in Bangladesh secondary school classrooms. To enable implementation, participants identified the need for specific strategies and support for schools and staff. For example, educators and professionals perceived that a valuable source of potential support lies in local communities and connecting schools with existing community organisations or government and non-government service providers (e.g., local health centres, community clinics, and disability development support agencies).

This study did not include development of a theoretical or practice-based model of what works for Bangladesh secondary schools to be inclusive, findings have revealed a number of factors that appear important. The implication of the study suggests that there needs to be consideration of both teacher factors and school factors. Consistent with the view of several researchers (e.g., Moen, 2008), the classroom teacher is critical in the development and provision of inclusive education, and regular classrooms appear to be the main context in which to provide inclusive education. According to Lawlor, two kinds of teacher preparation are needed. Firstly, a deep understanding of the subject, and secondly, on-the-job-training in the practice of teaching (cited in Orchard & Winch, 2015). Lee and Low (2013) argue that teachers' prior training in teaching children with disabilities is an important factor that influences teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. Therefore, pre-service training programmes for secondary teachers should aim to include issues related to teaching children with disabilities.

The findings also suggest five interrelated components for inclusive education, namely: inclusive values, inclusive policies, collaboration, inclusive teaching, and inclusive assessment. Inclusive values are framed by broader societal and local community contexts. Educational success for children with disabilities requires collaborative effort or working together with teachers, families and specialists, as well as the student (The New Zealand Curriculum Update, March 2012). Finally, assessment that genuinely reflects children's learning and achievement is critical for the educational advancement of children with disabilities.

Individualised education programmes (IEPs) are perceived as integral to educating students with disabilities in schools (Gartin, 2005; Martin, 2010). Several decades ago the US, followed by other developed nations, introduced the obligatory preparation of IEPs for children with special education needs. Since the introduction of IEPs, the US has gradually moved their focus toward full inclusion. Unfortunately, the provision of IEPs is absent from the Bangladesh context. In fact, the school cases showed that the practice of teacher-led lectures as the main mode of teaching was in itself not really compatible with IEPs. Therefore, this study recommends empowering teachers and parents to develop an understanding of the IEP process. The parents who participated in study interviews reported an unwillingness on the part of the staff to listen to parents. This was seen as a contributing factor in the failure to develop a collaborative partnership which would benefit all children. This study highlights that effective communication between parents and educators is paramount and should be a priority for all professional development programmes.

Slee and Allan (2001) argue that inclusive education requires understanding of different knowledge bases. This study contributes by adding information to the knowledge on inclusive education and experiences of secondary school students in Bangladesh and helps to reduce the existing research-policy gap.

Research implications

Increased understanding of perspectives and concepts of disability should influence professional knowledge and policy-making (Siska & Habib, 2013). The current study further strengthens our understanding of disabilities in Bangladesh. Utilising the critical disability framework, the study intended to “re-evaluate and critique notions of disability in order to facilitate social change” (Peña, Stapleton, & Schaffer, 2016, p.89)

and assumed “that disabled people are undervalued and discriminated against and this cannot be changed simply through liberal or neoliberal legislation and policy” (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p.65). The critical disability framework has implications for further research in the field of inclusive education and disabilities.

The magnitude of the number of children with disabilities excluded from education in Bangladesh (see Chapter Two) has become a subject of research interest. Thus, educators and policymakers around the world are searching for ways in which these children can be identified and then supported appropriately in educational settings (Mitchell, 2008). Crockett and Kauffman (1998) suggested that developing countries should provide children with disabilities a feasible education option in order to make enhance and provide purpose to their lives. Several initiatives have been undertaken at global, regional and national levels. Segregated special education, integration, inclusion, and reasonable inclusion are examples of the different provisions that have emerged with the intention of providing education for students with disabilities.

For the last two decades, debate has intensified around the globalisation of inclusive education (Rayner, 2007). This debate has divided the arena of special education into two schools of thought, namely full inclusion and partial or reasonable inclusion (Deng, 2010). As yet Bangladesh is yet to decide if it will pursue full or reasonable inclusion. The study’s findings suggest that closer examination of these variants of inclusion is warranted to determine which might work in Bangladesh. This should include exploration of how these different provisions influence or are influenced by classroom practices.

Inclusive education involves transforming education systems (Charema, 2010). The findings suggest that transformation of Bangladesh secondary schools is likely needed for students with disabilities to be included. Therefore further research is suggested to answer these questions: *How are children with disabilities best served in Bangladesh secondary school?* and, *Is inclusive education a viable option to support children with disabilities in Bangladesh secondary schools?* Research to determine specific school and class based strategies that work in the Bangladesh context is also needed. Several examples reported in this study suggest that positive changes can be made with limited resources.

Boundaries of this study

The boundaries of this study involved a selection of Bangladesh secondary schools and a small group of teacher educators, government official and education administrators, development activists, and academics and a politician. In addition to the local boundaries, this study was undoubtedly influenced by the global education context through the analysis of global and national policies. Greenwood (2016) explored the importance of place within doctoral research, and considered place as “localised, experiential, interactional, embedded in history and discourses, and often multi-faceted and fluid” (p. 1). The study utilised a constructivist approach, criticality and critical disability framework to explore the influence of global policies on local policies. The study boundaries shifted during the study to enable exploration of situational realities of inclusive education aspirations and practices.

Each of the secondary schools involved in the study was selected in an attempt to provide examples of the diverse range of schools in Bangladesh. Collectively, the individual school case studies portrayed an overarching picture of inclusive education practices in Bangladesh secondary schools. However, it is not claimed that the views, opinions or practices reported from these schools is representative of, or generalisable across Bangladesh. The individual case studies focused on how schools strategised their teaching and classroom practices while accommodating students with disabilities within regular classrooms, and thus provided contextual examples of practise that may have resonances with other schools in the country. Although the cases are confined to the particular context and time, they provided insight into the complexity of inclusive education practices in Bangladesh secondary schools.

Concluding thoughts

The findings of this study revealed the variation between global and local expectations in terms of inclusive education policies and practices. It examined how global expectations are influencing the government of a developing country to enact policies and the challenges being faced in the implementation of these policies. The findings affirm that current policies in Bangladesh project a level of idealism that has not been translated into practices. This suggests that international agencies are attempting to influence and direct the country towards inclusion without considering the realities of life in Bangladesh. In this study, it was identified constraints, opportunities and choices

for future change which would in turn broaden global understandings of inclusive education and might contribute to wider national and international debates around inclusive education.

Many developing countries, including Bangladesh, have signed and ratified various international conventions advocating for full inclusion and imposing legal as well as ethical obligations on countries to move towards full inclusion. The findings revealed the complexity of implementing global covenants and policies. The study also uncovered valuable information regarding the wider acceptance of the inclusion phenomenon in a developing country where challenges are enormous, and provision of a continuum of services has yet to be initiated. Finally, the significance of the outcomes of the study should not be overstated, given that this research marks one of the first attempts to gauge where the pinch-points are on translating inclusive education policies into practice.

The cultural legacy of Bangladesh's support for social justice, stipulated in the Constitution, affirms equal rights of all citizens including persons with disabilities. An all-out system of reformation may be required to ensure the rights of children with disabilities in education. However reforming the Bangladesh education system will be difficult. Similarly, changing the conditions for children with disabilities in education will not be an easy task. In this regards, we should attempt to move ahead using optimism to cast aside fear and hesitation. The road to inclusion for Bangladesh secondary schools will likely benefit from reformation of not just the education system but a broader societal reformation of the conceptualisations and beliefs about the people who are different. This will require a shift in consciousness of the people of Bangladesh. Similar to what Jyotiprasad Agarwala³⁰ depicted in his poem 'জন চেতনা'

*Today, the new consciousness of the people
Awake, worldwide,
In that light the people of the world
Crave a new life
Clashing with that spirit
The thick walls of centuries-old injustice crumble.*

³⁰ Agarwala, 1949 (translation by Gohain, 2012, p. 206–7), as cited in Dutta, 2013, p. 452

Appendices

Appendix 1: Grade wise total number of students with disabilities in Bangladesh secondary schools in 2015.

Table 10.

Students with disabilities in Bangladesh secondary schools

Year/Grade	Students with disabilities		Total students		% of disabled students
	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	
VI	15126	5843	2473337	1332686	0.61%
VII	13372	5015	2271912	1226967	0.59%
VIII	11741	4748	2105241	1131179	0.56%
IX	8286	3220	1570455	820238	0.53%
X	9532	2365	1322127	682892	0.72%
Total	58057	21191	9743072	5193962	0.60%
Summary					
Numbers of Secondary Schools			20297		
Number of enrolled students with disabilities			58057		
Students with disabilities per school			2.86		

Source: *Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), 2016, Table 3.3.6; Table 3.1.0 & Table 3.3.8.*

Appendix 2: Professional conversations guidelines

Project Title: *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh Secondary Schools*

Professional Conversations guideline

(n.b. there will be few common questions to be asked to all, then few specific questions related to the interviewee's role and responsibility may be asked)

Guiding questions (to all):

- i) What works for Bangladesh implementation of inclusive education at secondary schools?;
- ii) What policies do we have for supporting the education of children with disabilities in mainstream schools?;
- iii) What might be changed to implementing inclusive education for children with disabilities in the Bangladesh education system?;

General Questions to all (Specific focus to secondary education)

- i) What are the notable successes and changes made in terms of education of children with disabilities in Bangladesh?;
- ii) What would be the major goal of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Bangladesh?;
- iii) What are major policies for inclusive education, and What are the major obstacles to implementation of the policies into practice?;
- iv) How do you evaluate the existing inclusive education practices (on the basis of following seven themes) for students with disabilities in our secondary schools? in terms of:
 - a. International commitments;
 - b. Placement and assessment;
 - c. Teachers responsiveness and their teaching practices;
 - d. Acceptance, peer interaction and bullying in the classroom;
 - e. Supports and resource allocation;
 - f. Accessibility issues for Secondary Schools;
 - g. Leadership and management

Specific questions:

Few specific questions may be asked in relation to the expertise and professional responsibilities of the participants.

Concluding remark:

Evaluate the success and/or failure we have in educating children with disabilities in terms of policy and practices.

Any special comment (if).....

Appendix 3: The individual consultation with school-head (interview guidelines)

Project Title: *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh Secondary Schools*

Individual Consultation Guidelines

General guidelines

The guidelines is designed to determine whether inclusion was being implemented at specific school sites and what models for inclusive practice were being utilised and what are the gaps between their practices and stated policy. The interview aims to understand interviews experiences around inclusive education practice and children with disabilities. The guidelines will consist of three broad guiding questions and other specific questions and a number of prompts will be given. Besides the following stated questions, different questions may be asked for any clarification needed regarding inclusive education practices emerged from observations as well as parents and teachers' interviews.

Guiding questions

Various guiding questions in different phases.

Phase 1 (The brief discussion soon after arriving at the school)

- i) What works for your school in terms of inclusive education for children with disabilities?
- ii) what does not work in your school in terms of inclusive education for children with disabilities?

Phase 2 (Again on completion of data collection activities).

- i) What you do for supporting children with disabilities in your school?
- iii) What might be changed to implementing inclusive education for children with disabilities?

Specific questions (could be asked)

Phase 1

- i) What do you think the idea of inclusive education? Do you think inclusive education is helpful for students? Why & How? Explain;.
- ii) How many numbers of children with disabilities are enrolled in your school? How did they get an educational placement and enrolment in your school?;

Phase 2

- i) How would you consider their academic condition:
- ii) (progress, interest, interaction, difficulties, acceptance) (describe critically with specific examples).
- iii) What are the barriers to education for students with disabilities?

Thematic questions (questions around the following themes depends on the conversations)

Phase 1

- i) Assessment, curriculum and enrollment issues;
- ii) Mechanisms and strategies which have proved effective in making the inclusive initiatives successful in the school;
- iii) Factors in success;
- iv) Areas of concerns and constraints in terms of inclusive education for students with disabilities;

Concluding question (*Phase 2*)

- v) The main implications of the lessons learned;
- vi) Comments/recommendations on educational rights of children with disabilities and inclusive education;
- vii) how would you like to see inclusive education in Bangladesh in future;
- viii) Any special comments that you like to say, but not in my questions.....

Prompts

My school is; Children with disabilities are....; Children with disabilities do not....; I am not clear about the . . .; Tell me more; Did I get you correctly...; Can you give me another example of that...; and How? Why? Really?.

Appendix 4: Interview with assistant head teacher (Interview guidelines)

Project Title: *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh Secondary Schools*

Interview Guidelines

General guidelines

Similar guidelines like interviewing head teachers were utilised. In addition, it was sought explanation or opinion on contextual issues that were emerged from observations or other interviews. Therefore, this interview guidelines were flexible and situated in the context. interviewing head teachers, class observations, or data. for interviewd assistant head teachers Alike, the head teacher's interview, this guidelines also consist of three broad guiding questions with a series of other questions and a number of prompts. Besides the following stated questions, different questions may be asked for any clarification needed regarding inclusive education practices emerged from head teachers, teachers and parents interview.

The guiding questions (in terms of inclusive education for children with disabilities)

- i) What works for your school,
- ii) what does not work in your school
- iii) what might be changed?
- iv) what you do for supporting students with disabilities in your school?

Supplementary questions (could be asked)

General

- i) What do you think the idea of inclusive education? Do you think inclusive education is helpful for students? Why & How? Explain.
- ii) How many numbers of children with disabilities are enrolled in your school?
How did they get an educational placement and enrolment in your school?
- iii) How your teachers perceived their role in the inclusive classrooms?

Contextual questions

Will be decided in the schools as emerged...

Concluding remarks

- i) Comments/recommendations on disability and inclusive education;
- ii) How would you like to see inclusive education in Bangladesh in future;
- iii) Any special comments, that you like to say, but not in my questions.....

Prompts

I agree with X..., I differ with the view of Y; My school is; I am not clear about the . . .; What do you mean by....?; Tell me more...?; Did I get you correctly...; Can you give me another example of that...; How? Why? Really?

Appendix 5: Group interview with teachers (interview guidelines)

Project Title: *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh Secondary Schools*

Interview guidelines

General Guidelines

The guidelines is designed to determine whether inclusion was being implemented at specific school sites and what models for inclusive practice were being utilised and what are the gaps between their practices and stated policy. The interview aim to understand interviews experiences around inclusive education practice and children with disabilities. The guidelines will consist of three broad guiding questions with a series of other questions and a number of prompts will be given.

Guiding questions

- i) what you do in the classroom for all students and students with disabilities?
- ii) What you do not do?
- iii) What might be change for effective teaching?.

Supplementary questions (could be asked as required)

Role as a teacher

- i) What should be an ideal role of a classroom teacher for teaching into inclusive environment?
- ii) Comments on educational rights of children with disabilities and inclusive education?.

Children with disabilities and classroom

- i) Describe a typical day with children with disabilities in your class?
- ii) How students with disabilities were included in your class?
- iii) What were your feelings then? Do you think that this is (your class/school) the appropriate place for the disabled students?
- iv) Did you find any problem because of the enrolment of those students?
- v) Does the presence of children with disabilities hamper your quality of life or teaching-learning activities?
- vi) Do you feel any challenges to manage children with disabilities in the class?

- vii) When you find any problem with them, where do you sought for help? Do you have teaching assistants or teaching staff to help them? Do you think it is important to have? Why?
- viii) Do you get supports from school (say head teacher, SMC etc)? What sorts of support you receive? Evaluate.

Teachers' practices

- i) How do peer group treat with the impaired student? Did you give them any lesson? If yes, what is that? Please provide an example.
- ii) How do parents of children with disabilities interact with you and support you in academic activities? Do you find any frustration among them?
- iii) Do the children with special needs have access to specialised services, such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, hearing services, speech therapy, mobility services or vision services?
- iv) Are there any specialists say, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, who from time to time help you address the special needs of the children with disabilities within the classroom?
- v) Are there materials or special aids for facilitating specific communication needs of children, including lessons in Braille, sign language, drawing or use of audio-tapes?

Academic Activities

- i) Do you offer any extra tutorial support for the children with disabilities? If yes, please specify.....;
- ii) How much time is given for extra support? (Total amount, approximately);
- iii) Do you find any particular difficulty to teach any special subject for children with disabilities?;
- iv) Which subject do you think children with disabilities find easier or harder? Why?;
- v) Recent progress/academic achievement of children with disabilities comparison with children without disabilities;
- vi) How do you communicate with your children with disabilities in the class?;

Prompts: Do you support the argument of X?; How do you differ with Y?; Inclusive education is...; I am not clear about the . . .; Tell me more...?; Did I get you correctly...; Can you give me another example of that...; How? Why? Really?

Appendix 6: The interview guidelines for parents (Interview guidelines)

Project Title: *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh Secondary Schools*

Interview guidelines

General guidelines

The interview aim to understand interviews experiences around inclusive education practice and children with disabilities. This guideline is designed to determine whether inclusion was being implemented at specific school sites and what models for inclusive practice were being utilised and what are the gaps between their practices and stated policy. The guidelines will consist of three broad guiding questions with a series of other questions and a number of prompts will be given.

Basic questions

- i) Say about your child's disability and present development status
- ii) How did you identified your child's disability?
- iii) Who looks after your child's education at home?

General questions

- i) What working well for your child in the school?
- ii) What does not work?
- iii) What might be changed for effective learning of your child?

Supplementary questions

- i) How do you feel with the present educational progress of your child in the school?
What sorts of support do you think necessary?
- ii) What do your child say about his/her school and teachers? (please mention specific example)
- iii) How do school/teachers interact with you and support your child in academic activities? Do you find any frustration among them?
- iv) How do you evaluate your child's participation in family, social and other activities?
- v) How your child was enrolled in this school? What is your evaluation.
- vi) Is there any house tutor for your child? Do you think it is important to have? Why?

Prompts : My child likes ...; My child does....; My child does not....; I am not clear about the . . .; What do you mean by....?; Tell me more...?; Did I get you correctly...; Can you give me another example of that...; How? Why? Really?

Appendix 7: Information sheet for school (Principal/ head teacher)

Project Title: *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh Secondary Schools*

Date/Month/Year

The Head Master/Principal

.....

.....

Dear Sir/madam (Principal/Head Teacher),

I am Muhammed Mahbubur Rahaman, Assistant Professor, Dhaka University, doing my PhD research at the College of Education, University of Canterbury under Prof Janinka Greenwood and Dr Dean Sutherland. My study will be taken place in Bangladesh with a focus on understanding inclusive education practices for students with disabilities in secondary schools with a particular emphasis on policy implementation and the influence of global policies. In this respect, I do define inclusive education practice as a system that serves all students adequately in regular classrooms with the required support.

For this research, data will be collected from interviews with head teachers, assistant head teachers, teachers and parents followed by school as well as classroom observations, contextualise photograph, and document analysis. The findings will be reviewed in the research process at the end of data collection. For taking photos and reviewing school documents, your permission is needed. Moreover, for interviews and observations, beside your permission, individual consent will be sought from participant teacher. Each observation will be limited to a specific classroom activity of the selected class. No findings that could identify any individual participant will be published.

Please be assured that particular care will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study and the anonymity of participants and their institutions in all publications of the findings. All data is to be securely stored in password protected facilities and/or locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study. Please also note that participation in the study is voluntary. If you do participate, your school has the right to withdraw from the study at any time prior to publication.

It is expected that the study findings would contribute to the policy making in Bangladesh after publication. Therefore, the results will also be reported internationally at conferences and in

College of Educationmahbub.rahaman@pg.canterbury.ac.nzmahbub@du.ac.bd

+64224160612 (NZ), +8801711958348 (BAN)



journals. All participating institutions will receive a full report of the results and recommendations of this study after being published upon request.

Please contact me if you have any further queries or concerns about the project or would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings. I can be reached by phone on +8801711958348 (in Bangladesh) or by email mahbub.rahaman@pg.canterbury.ac.nz or mahbub@du.ac.bd.

Please note that this project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. If you have a complaint about the study, you may either contact the Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz), or my senior supervisor Prof. Janinka Greenwood, at janinka.greenwood@canterbury.ac.nz.

If you agree to this research being undertaken in your school, please sign and return the attached consent form in the envelope provided by Day/Date/Month. I look forward to working with you.

With Warm Regards,

Muhammed Mahbubur Rahaman

Assistant Professor

Institute of Education and Research

University of Dhaka

&

PhD Candidate

College of Education, Health and Human Development

University of Canterbury

New Zealand

Appendix 8: Declaration of consent to participate (from School)

Project Title: *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh Secondary Schools*

Declaration of Consent to Participate (from School)

I agree on behalf of my institution to participate in a research study of *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh Secondary Schools*. I have read and understood the information provided about this research project. I understand that participation in this research is voluntary and that my school may withdraw at any time prior to publication of the findings. I understand that all information will be kept confidential to the researcher and that any published or reported results will not identify me or my institution. I understand that all data from this research will be stored securely for five years following the study. I understand that my institution receive a report on the findings of this study and have provided my mailing/email details below for this purpose. I understand that I will show the school documents as required by the researcher for this project. I understand that researchers will take photos would be utilised in his report. I will show the school documents as required by the researcher for this project. I also understand that I can get more information about this project from the researcher, and that I can contact the University of Canterbury Ethics Committee (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz), or the senior supervisor Professor Janinka Greenwood (janinka.greenwood@canterbury.ac.nz) if I have any complaints about the research

By signing below, I agree to participate on behalf of my school in this research project and grant my permission for the data to be use in the process of completing a PhD degree, including a thesis and any other future publications. I also grant permission to audio-recording of the classroom observations. Before observing the classroom activities, it will need to ensure that the concern teacher has his/her consent.

Name:

Date:

Signature:

Email:

Please return this completed consent form in the envelope provided by Day/Date/Month

Appendix 9: Information sheet for assistant head teachers (for interview)

Project Title: *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh Secondary Schools*

Information Sheet for Assistant Head Teachers (for interview)

Date/Month/Year

Address of Recipient

Dear Sir/madam (Assistant Head Teacher),

I am Muhammed Mahbubur Rahaman, Assistant Professor, Dhaka University, doing my PhD research at the College of Education, University of Canterbury under Prof Janinka Greenwood and Dr Dean Sutherland. My study will be taken place in Bangladesh with a focus on understanding inclusive education practices for students with disabilities in secondary schools with a particular emphasis on policy implementation and the influence of global policies. In this respect, I do define inclusive education practice as a system that serves all students adequately in regular classrooms with the required support.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed, and rules and guidelines will be sent beforehand. Please note that each interview should take 30-40 minutes to complete and will be conducted once during a break period or other convenient time of yours especially. In the interview,

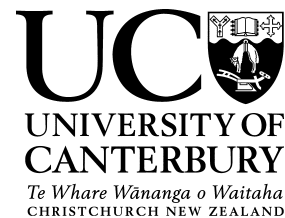
Please note that participation in this study is voluntary. If you do participate, you have the right to decline to answer any questions and to withdraw from the study at any time prior to publication without any penalty. All data will be treated confidentially and anonymity will be preserved at all times. As part of the research process, the researcher will undertake both interviews and observations. Your interview will be recorded on an audiotape recorder. No information that could identify any individual participant will be published. Pseudonyms will be used to maintain the anonymity of participants. All data is to be securely stored in password protected facilities and/or preserved by me for five years following the study. After 5 years, the data will be destroyed. If desired, all participants will receive a report on the findings of this study and a copy of any resulting publication.

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mahbub.rahaman@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

mahbub@du.ac.bd

+64224160612 (NZ), +8801711958348 (BAN)



Please contact me if you have any further queries or concerns about the project or would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings. I can be reached by phone on +8801711958348 or by email mahbub.rahaman@pg.canterbury.ac.nz or mahbub@du.ac.bd.

Please note that this project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. If you have a complaint about the study, you may either contact the Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz), or my senior supervisor Prof. Janinka Greenwood, at janinka.greenwood@canterbury.ac.nz.

If you agree to be a part of this research, please sign and return the attached consent form in the envelope provided by Day/Date/Month. I look forward to working with you. Please be advised that you can withdraw at any time by contacting the researcher.

With Warm Regards,

Muhammed Mahbubur Rahaman

Assistant Professor

Institute of Education and Research

University of Dhaka

&

PhD Candidate

College of Education, Health and Human Development

University of Canterbury

New Zealand

Appendix 10: Consent form for assistant head teachers to participate in the study

Project Title: *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh Secondary Schools*

Consent Form for Assistant Head Teachers to Participate in the Study

I have read and understood the information provided about the above mentioned research project. Therefore, I do agree to participate in this study. I understand and agree that I will be interviewed once at my convenient time, and that will be audio recorded and transcribed. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time prior to publication of the findings. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that any published or reported results will not identify me or my institution. I understand that all data from this research will be stored securely for five years following the study. I understand that I will receive a report on the findings of this study and have provided my mailing/email details below for this purpose. I understand that I can get more information about this project from the researcher, and if I have any complaints, I can contact the University of Canterbury Education Human Ethics Committee (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz), or with the senior supervisor Professor Janinka Greenwood (janinka.greenwood@canterbury.ac.nz).

By signing below, I hereby agree to participate in this research project and grant my permission for the data to be use in the process of completing a PhD degree, including a thesis and any other future publications. I also grant permission for interviews to be audio-recorded.

Name:

Date:

Signature:

Email :

Please return this consent form in the envelope provided by Day/Date/Month.

Appendix 11: Information sheet for teachers (for interview and classroom observation)

Project Title: *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh Secondary Schools*

Information Sheet for Teachers (for interview and classroom observation)

Date/Month/Year

Address of Recipient

Dear Sir/madam,

I am Muhammed Mahbubur Rahaman, Assistant Professor, Dhaka University, doing my PhD research at the College of Education, University of Canterbury under Prof Janinka Greenwood and Dr Dean Sutherland. My study will be taken place in Bangladesh with a focus on understanding inclusive education practices for students with disabilities in secondary schools with a particular emphasis on policy implementation and the influence of global policies. In this respect, I do define inclusive education practice as a system that serves all students adequately in regular classrooms with the required support.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, you will be included for the group interview with your colleagues, and rules and guidelines will be sent beforehand. Moreover, your class may be observed to understand teaching and learning activities.

Please note that each group interview should take 40-50 minutes to complete and will be conducted once during a break period or other convenient time of teachers especially. In the interview, I will ask predetermined questions about teachers' experience of inclusive practices. On the other hand, a pre-discussion will be made before classroom observation.

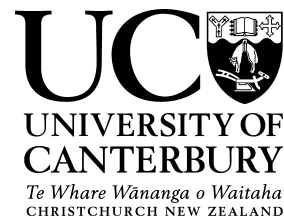
Please note that participation in this study is voluntary. If you do participate, you have the right to decline to answer any questions and to withdraw from the study at any time prior to publication without any penalty. All data will be treated confidentially and anonymity will be preserved at all times. As part of the research process, the researcher will undertake both interviews and observations. Your interview will be recorded on an audiotape recorder. No information that could identify any individual participant will be published. Pseudonyms will be used to maintain the anonymity of participants. All data is to be securely stored in password protected facilities and/or preserved by me for five years following the study. After 5 years, the data will be destroyed. If

College of Education

mahbub.rahaman@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

mahbub@du.ac.bd

+64224160612 (NZ), +8801711958348 (BAN)



desired, all participants will receive a report on the findings of this study and a copy of any resulting publication.

Please contact me if you have any further queries or concerns about the project or would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings. I can be reached by phone on +8801711958348 or by email mahbub.rahaman@pg.canterbury.ac.nz or mahbub@du.ac.bd.

Please note that this project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. If you have a complaint about the study, you may either contact the Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz), or my senior supervisor Prof. Janinka Greenwood, at janinka.greenwood@canterbury.ac.nz.

If you agree to be a part of this research, please sign and return the attached consent form in the envelope provided by Day/Date/Month. I look forward to working with you. Please be advised that you can withdraw at any time by contacting the researcher.

With Warm Regards,

Muhammed Mahbubur Rahaman

Assistant Professor

Institute of Education and Research

University of Dhaka

&

PhD Candidate

College of Education, Health and Human Development

University of Canterbury

New Zealand

Appendix 12: Consent form for teachers to participate in the study

Project Title: *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh Secondary Schools*

Consent Form for Teachers to Participate in the Study

I have read and understood the information provided about the above mentioned research project. Therefore, I do agree to participate in this study. I understand and agree that I will attend in a group interview once for about 40-50 minutes with few of my colleagues at our convenient time and my class may be observed once that will be audio recorded and transcribed. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time prior to publication of the findings. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that any published or reported results will not identify me or my institution. I understand that all data from this research will be stored securely for five years following the study. I understand that I will receive a report on the findings of this study and have provided my mailing/email details below for this purpose. I understand that I can get more information about this project from the researcher, and if I have any complaints, I can contact the University of Canterbury Education Human Ethics Committee (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz), or with the senior supervisor Professor Janinka Greenwood (janinka.greenwood@canterbury.ac.nz).

By signing below, I hereby agree to participate in this research project and grant my permission for the data to be use in the process of completing a PhD degree, including a thesis and any other future publications. I also grant permission for interviews and observations to be audio-recorded.

Name:

Date:

Signature:

Email :

Please return this consent form in the envelope provided by Day/Date/Month.

Appendix 13: Information sheet for participants (Professional conversation)

Project Title: *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh Secondary Schools*

Information Sheet for Professionals/Expert/Policy Persons (Professional Conversation)

Date/Month/Year

Address of Recipient

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Muhammed Mahbubur Rahaman, Assistant Professor, Dhaka University, doing my PhD research at the College of Education, University of Canterbury under Prof Janinka Greenwood and Dr Dean Sutherland. My study will be taken place in Bangladesh with a focus on understanding inclusive education practices for students with disabilities in secondary schools with a particular emphasis on policy implementation and the influence of global policies. In this respect, I do define inclusive education practice as a system that serves all students adequately in regular classrooms with the required support.

For this research, field data will be collected for the study at two levels: first, from conversation with experts and professionals; and second, information from schools. For getting professional opinion, consultation with you is important for this study. No findings that could identify any individual participant will be published.

Please be assured that particular care will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study and the anonymity of participants and their institutions in all publications of the findings. All data is to be securely stored in password protected facilities and/or locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study. Please also note that participation in the study is voluntary. If you do participate, your school has the right to withdraw from the study at any time prior to publication.

It is expected that the study findings would contribute to the policy making in Bangladesh after publication. Therefore, the results will also be reported internationally at conferences and in journals. All participating institutions will receive a full report of the results and recommendations of this study after being published upon request.

College of Educationmahbub.rahaman@pg.canterbury.ac.nzmahbub@du.ac.bd

+64224160612 (NZ), +8801711958348 (BAN)



Please contact me if you have any further queries or concerns about the project or would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings. I can be reached by phone on +8801711958348 (in Bangladesh) or by email mahbub.rahaman@pg.canterbury.ac.nz or mahbub@du.ac.bd.

Please note that this project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. If you have a complaint about the study, you may either contact the Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz), or my senior supervisor Prof. Janinka Greenwood, at janinka.greenwood@canterbury.ac.nz.

If you agree to this research being undertaken in your school, please sign and return the attached consent form in the envelope provided by Day/Date/Month. I look forward to working with you.

With Warm Regards,

Muhammed Mahbubur Rahaman

Assistant Professor

Institute of Education and Research

University of Dhaka

&

PhD Candidate

College of Education, Health and Human Development

University of Canterbury

New Zealand

Appendix 14: Consent form to participate (Professional conversations)

Project Title: *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh Secondary Schools*

Consent Form for Professionals to Participate in the Study

I have read and understood the information provided about the above mentioned research project. Therefore, I do agree to participate in this study. I understand and agree that I will be interviewed once for about 40-50 minutes at my convenient time and that will be audio recorded and transcribed. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time prior to publication of the findings. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that any published or reported results will not identify me or my institution. I understand that all data from this research will be stored securely for five years following the study. I understand that I will receive a report on the findings of this study and have provided my mailing/email details below for this purpose. I understand that I can get more information about this project from the researcher, and if I have any complaints, I can contact the University of Canterbury Education Human Ethics Committee (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz), or with the senior supervisor Professor Janinka Greenwood (janinka.greenwood@canterbury.ac.nz).

By signing below, I hereby agree to participate in this research project and grant my permission for the data to be used in the process of completing a PhD degree, including a thesis and any other future publications.

Name:

Date:

Signature:

Email :

Please return this consent form in the envelope provided by Day/Date/Month.

Appendix 15: Information sheet for parents (interview)

Project Title: *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh
Secondary Schools*

Information Sheet for Parents (for interview)

Date/Month/Year

Address of Recipient

Dear Sir/madam,

I am Muhammed Mahbubur Rahaman, Assistant Professor, Dhaka University, doing my PhD research at the College of Education, University of Canterbury under Prof Janinka Greenwood and Dr Dean Sutherland. My study will be taken place in Bangladesh with a focus on understanding inclusive education practices for students with disabilities in secondary schools with a particular emphasis on policy implementation and the influence of global policies. In this respect, I do define inclusive education practice as a system that serves all students adequately in regular classrooms with the required support.

The head teacher of the school where your child is studying provided his consent on behalf of his/her school to participate in this study. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed at your convenient place and should take 20-30 minutes to complete.

Please note that data will be collected from interviews with parents conducted once. In the interview, I will ask predetermined questions about parents' experiences of inclusive practices for their children with disabilities.

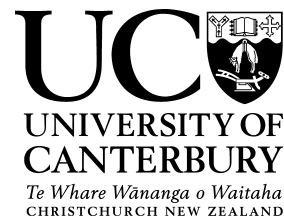
Please note that participation in this study is voluntary. If you do participate, you have the right to decline to answer any questions and to withdraw from the study at any time prior to publication without any penalty. All data will be treated confidentially and anonymity will be preserved at all times. As part of the research process, the researcher will undertake both interviews and observations. Your interview will be recorded on an audiotape recorder. No information that could identify any individual participant will be published. Pseudonyms will be used to maintain the anonymity of participants. All data is to be securely stored in password protected facilities and/or preserved by me for five years following the study. After 5 years, the data will be destroyed. If

College of Education

mahbub.rahaman@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

mahbub@du.ac.bd

+64224160612 (NZ), +8801711958348 (BAN)



desired, all participants will receive a report on the findings of this study and a copy of any resulting publication.

Please contact me if you have any further queries or concerns about the project or would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings. I can be reached by phone on +8801711958348 or by email mahbub.rahaman@pg.canterbury.ac.nz or mahbub@du.ac.bd.

Please note that this project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. If you have a complaint about the study, you may either contact the Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz), or my senior supervisor Prof. Janinka Greenwood, at janinka.greenwood@canterbury.ac.nz.

If you agree to be a part of this research, please sign and return the attached consent form in the envelope provided by Day/Date/Month. I look forward to working with you. Please be advised that you can withdraw at any time by contacting the researcher.

With Warm Regards,

Muhammed Mahbubur Rahaman

Assistant Professor

Institute of Education and Research

University of Dhaka

&

PhD Candidate

College of Education, Health and Human Development

University of Canterbury

New Zealand

Appendix 16: Consent form for parents participate in the study

Project Tile: *Inclusive Education Aspirations: Exploration of Policy and Practice in Bangladesh Secondary Schools*

Consent Form for Parents Participate in the Study

I have read and understood the information provided about the above mentioned research project. Therefore, I do agree to participate in this study. I understand and agree that I will be interview once for about 20-30 minutes at my convenient time. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time prior to publication of the findings. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that any published or reported results will not identify me or my institution. I understand that all data from this research will be stored securely for five years following the study. I understand that I will receive a report on the findings of this study and have provided my mailing/email details below for this purpose. I understand that I can get more information about this project from the researcher, and if I have any complaints, I can contact the University of Canterbury Education Human Ethics Committee (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz), or with the senior supervisor Professor Janinka Greenwood (janinka.greenwood@canterbury.ac.nz).

By signing below, I hereby agree to participate in this research project and grant my permission for the data to be use in the process of completing a PhD degree, including a thesis and any other future publications.

Name:

Date:

Signature:

Email :

Please return this consent form in the envelope provided by Day/Date/Month

Appendix 17: Key discourses and models that are named/referred to throughout the thesis

Due to the importance of, and influences on the education of children with disabilities in mainstream education, the models, discourses and theories related to disabilities and education play a vital role. Throughout this thesis, a number of key discourses and models have been referred to in relation to specific policies and practices. This section provides a brief explanation of these models and discourses. This section is divided into three parts. These are: Part A: Models of disability; and Part B: Discourses of disability; and Part C: Discourses related to educational approaches for children with disabilities.

Part A: Models of disability

Within the thesis, a total of 11 models (including four major models) of disabilities are described. The major models are: i). Medical model of disability; ii). Welfare Model; iii). Charity Model; and iv). Social model of disability. Besides these major models, another seven models have also referred in the thesis. Each of these models are described below:

i) Medical model of disability: The Medical model locates the disability within individuals (Marks, 1997). According to Söder (1989), the medical/clinical perspective specifies children's differences and disabilities as a result of their individual pathology. The medical model has also been referred to as a deficit model and bio-physical model (Thomas & Loxley, 2001). This approach views disability as an abnormality and seeks to account for this with a range of social and other explanations. Macfarlane (2007) describes the medical model as based on the work of Phillip Pinel (1745-1826), and emphasises the organic origin of human behaviour. Teachers who are influenced by this model "emphasize routine and order, frequent repetition of learning tasks, sequential presentation and reduction of extraneous environment stimuli" (Walker and Shea, 1999, cited in Macfarlane, 2007, p.29). According to Seelman, (2007), the medical model is based on "scientific views and practice, typically in the medical and health knowledge base" (p. 2061).

ii) Welfare model of disability: This model perceives similar views of deficit discourses, but suggests disability is a matter of suffering due to incapability of individuals. Therefore, the persons needs protection by the society. The society or group of people undertake several initiatives to ensure the welfare of a person with disabilities.

The education of children with disabilities is viewed from welfare perspectives as opposed to a rights-based perspective. Generally, this discourse does not expect persons with disabilities to be independent and expects recipients to be grateful. Teachers in chapter nine identified the dominance of welfare discourse as a barrier towards inclusion, as the motto aligned to this discourse is to ensure welfare of, and provide specific benefits for persons with disabilities.

iii) Charity model of disability: According to Rahaman (2011), the charity model of disability is evident in the everyday life in Bangladesh. In this model, people often try to help a person with disabilities from an attitude of charity. According to Corbett (1996), the basic assumption of this model is that the people with disabilities are somehow helpless and dependent on others. The model imposes a limit on the expectation of the children with disabilities within their families and wider communities. According to this model, whatever the individual with a disability and their families receive from the state and society is beyond expectation and recipients should be grateful for what they receive. However, this model is also closely connected to the medical model in terms of its institutional and organizational focus. Within the charity model, people with impairments are perceived to have “empty and useless lives” (Morton & Munford, 1998) and are best “out of sight, out of mind”. According to Corbett (1996), this model takes the curricula for providing training on ‘acceptable behaviours’ (Corbett, 1996, p. 12). The charity model is based on themes of pity, dependence, eternal child and it relies on the medical model for its privileged status. Under this model people show their sympathy rather empathy or compassion towards people with disabilities.

iv) The lay model of disability: This model emerged from the medical and charity discourse and is our “everyday” knowledge of disability and difference (Millar & Morton, 2007, p.166). In the lay model, impairments mean that “people are inferior, dependent and childlike” (p.166). According to Morris (1991) they cannot be an integrated as part of our wider workforce that is why they need lifelong supervision. Corbett (1996, p. 12) coined the term ‘language of patronage’, which describes the idea of ongoing dependency. The person with disabilities is seen as requiring training that will make them useful and so ‘avoid being seen as nothing more than a burden’ (Millar & Morton, p.167). This model is based on the themes of fear and dependence.

v) The resistance model of disability: The resistance model of disability originated from disabled people and their organisations criticizing the medical model of disability

and demanding greater participation in decision making. It is a form of protest against the ignorance and deprivation faced by people with disabilities. This model defines people with disability as not the patient, not the client/consumer, and not the victim. This model rejects all negative social constructions towards disability. Philosophically, it supports that there is no difference between people with and without disabilities.

vi) Social model of disability: The social model is the antithesis of the medical model. This model perceives disability from a socio-cultural perspective. The key assumption is ‘disability as a social construct’. The sociocultural model, organized by the works of Vygotsky (1896 –1934), considers that “higher-order functions develop out of social interaction” (Macfarlane, 2007, p.32). According to Rahaman (2011), this model recognizes the diversity and considers the adoption of a constructive approach. “There is nothing more practical than a good theory” (Macfarlane, 2007, p.25). On the other hand, McKenzie and Macleod, (2012) argued that the social model of disability informs a human rights agenda in addressing inequities arising from the unfair treatment of people with impairments (p.16). This social constructivist viewpoint is considered by some to be a less useful position than viewing special educational needs as resulting from an interaction of social and psychological factors (e.g., Hornby, 2009).

vii) Rights model of disability: According to Rahaman (2011), the most commonly accepted model of disability is the ‘Rights Model’. The key themes of this model are self-reliance, independence/interdependence, consumer choice, and citizenship. This model answers the question, ‘What happens when the rights of a small minority are pitted against the rights of the dominant majority?’ (Morton, 2010). The rights model shares similarities with the social model. The model is also supported under the constitution of Bangladesh which assures the rights of children with disabilities as citizens of the country.

viii) The adaptability approach to disability: According to Macfarlane (2007), the adaptability approach treats disability as arising out of some mal-adaptation of the individual to the environment, due perhaps to the expectations imposed by people in that environment. The adaptability approach links with the social constructionist approach which specifies that “disabilities are constructed on the basis of interpretations made because of social values and beliefs” (Thomas & Loxley, 2001, p.3). These approaches of viewing disability issues are important for designing education for children with disabilities.

ix) Expert-client model of disability: This model is related to medical model in that it is based on a narrow range of views and practices involving health and welfare. A person with disabilities is treated as a patient/client and they have little choice regarding the intervention process. The decision-making rest mostly with the professionals. The limitation of this model comes from the biomedical perception of normalcy and the narrow band of knowledge related to medical and health science. The social basis and perspectives of people with disabilities are not taking into consideration under this model. The findings of bio-medical research is vital within this model.

x) The integrative model of disability: The Integrative model involves integrating the positive aspects of medical and social models. This model has a broad knowledge base ranging from medicine to literature that is informed by the experiences of people with disabilities. This model is still “under construction” (Seelman, 2007, p. 2064). This model is based on the perspectives that recognise the multi-dimensional roles of the individuals with disabilities. There are a number of evolving policies and practices originated from the WHO and US that are representative of this model.

xi)The management/market model of disability: The management/market model of disability is related to the marketing of disability issues for raising capital to support development of persons with disabilities. This model is the byproduct of capitalism and is based on themes of allocating (scarce) resources, value for money, cost-benefit ratios, and cost effectiveness. Within these points of view, people are viewed as clients or consumers who are ‘purchasing’ services from the service providers or professionals. In this way, disability is treated as a business where inclusion is seen as accommodation or tolerance.

Part B: Discourses of disability

In addition to the above models of disability, a range of disability discourses are referenced in the thesis. These are i) Deficit-discourse of disabilities; ii) ability/capability discourse; iii) Rights-based discourse; and iv) the dis/ability discourse. Discourse is very important for assessing policies in education and reviewing and developing initiatives for educating children with disabilities. According to Neilson (2000), “Discourses can influence people’s attitudes and their thoughts, feelings, and actions” (p.15). Due to the influences on policy interpretation, disability discourses are important for policymakers and teachers. The analysis of policy texts revealed that

different discourses relating to persons with disabilities, and subsequent models of disability received priority in the development of different policies.

i) Deficit-discourse of disabilities: Teachers in mainstream classrooms were influenced by deficit thinking. The deficit discourse perceives disability as a source of challenges or barriers in academic activities. When teachers perceive disability from a deficit perspective, then he/she tends to ignore the learning needs of children with disabilities. For example, the Nishi's story in chapter five showed that teachers paid minimum attention to her needs, as most teachers thought that attention to an individual would create a disadvantage for the majority of students without disabilities.

ii) Socio-cultural discourses of disability: The socio-cultural discourse originated from social models of disability. These discourses contrast with the deficit discourse of disability and perceived disability as a social construct (WHO & WB, 2011). This suggests that disability is not an obstacle to success and that consideration of the attitudes and abilities of others, together with arrangements within the physical environment, are significant for the inclusion of people with disabilities.

iii) Deficit-hegemonic discourse: Described by Hill and Rahaman (2013), as the inconsistencies in describing or defining or categorising disabilities due to influences from categorizing children with disabilities.. The deficit-hegemonic discourse reflects inconsistencies in different policies or texts because of the hegemonic influences of peoples involved. Within this discourse, the categories of disabilities change overtime. For example, the first ever legal categorisation of disabilities in Bangladesh was made by the BPDWA (2001). It categorised disabilities into six types, whereas the recent legislation the RPPDA (2013) expanded this categorisation of persons with disabilities into 12 categories. Nguyen (2010) expressed concern about the influences of hegemonic ideologies promulgated by global policy frameworks in many countries around the discourse of inclusion at both educational and political levels.

iv) Rights-based discourse: This discourse establishes that the children with disabilities have the same rights as their peers enjoy within society. Therefore, this discourse intends to establish an equitable society for children with disabilities. In contrast to a deficit discourse, it declares that disability is not an attribute of the person. Moreover, it prohibits discrimination on the ground of disabilities. It advocates for taking steps to include children with disabilities in mainstream schools, as experiencing education in the nearby mainstream school is a right for a child with a disability.

v) The dis/ability discourse: The dis/ability discourse is a mix of medical and social discourses of disability, with the policy describing the education possibilities for children with disabilities. This discourse supports an integrated approach for education. For example, the inclusive-special education approach of the National Education Policy 2010 (MoE, 2010) of Bangladesh.

vi) Ability/capability discourse: This discourse assumes that the students' learning and development depends on their ability, as opposed to their environment and opportunities. It appears focused on capability and developing strategies for children with disabilities. This constructs children's lack of ability as the barrier to accessing mainstream education. For example, this discourse was reflected in the National Education Policy 2010 which illustrated by this statement, "These children [children with severe disabilities] are incapable of studying in the usual schooling system" (MoE, 2010, p.51).

vii) Discourse of uncertainty: Discourse of uncertainty refers teacher's confusion with the success and strategies designed to support the inclusion for children with disabilities. Uncertainty arises when a teacher is not sure how to teach children with disabilities in their classroom. The lack of teachers' knowledge is expressed through a discourse of uncertainty. Further causes of uncertainty include different understanding among the teachers of inclusion and the needs of students with disabilities; limited experiences of collaborative teaching approaches.

viii) Inclusion discourse: The discourse of inclusion is based on the possible full inclusion of all children. Rahaman and Sutherland (2011) stated that, "Inclusion is an educational philosophy that emphasizes the rights of all children to attend their local school..." (p.31). According to the New Zealand special education policy 2000 or SE-2000, the aims of this discourse are to: improve educational opportunities and outcomes for learners, ensure there are clear, consistent and predictable funding guidelines, and providing school communities with flexibility and choice. According to the policy statement, "The government's aim is to achieve over the next decade a world class education system that provides learning opportunities of equal quality for all students." (MoE [NZ], 2000, p.5).

Part C. Discourse related to the education approach for children with disabilities

In an attempt to develop "the Understanding of Bangladesh policy perspectives" in Chapter 4, two major educational discourses along with few minor and inherent

discourses were referred to. The two major educational discourses were Special Education and Inclusive discourses. The integrated approach was a minor educational discourse which located between these two majors discourses. These discourses are also influenced by political discourses about educating children with disabilities.

i) Special education discourse: Special Education discourse encourages disability-specific Education institutions to cater to the needs of the specific categories of children with disabilities. The discourse also supports the design and development of specialised curriculum and special text books and a separate Examination System, when situations demand. According to Tearle and Spandagou, (2012), Special Educational Institutes may be defined as institutions where children with disabilities are provided special types of education instead of the mainstream education. This discourse favour separate education settings which are isolated from the mainstream. This discourse is based on the medical model or deficit discourse of disability.

ii) Inclusive education discourse: The analysis of policy text shows that the Inclusive discourses are related to social justice phenomenon. The main goal is the education of children with disabilities in mainstream settings. It is based on rights-based model of disability, with education seen as a right for children with disabilities. Inclusion is based on a commitment to key values and principles that are constantly being questioned, discussed and developed within and between schools (Carrington, MacArthur, Kearney, Kimber, Mercer, Morton & Rutherford, 2012, p.7).

iii) A third discourse: integrated approach: A third discourse located between special and inclusive discourses, is underpinned by a collaborative effort to provide an appropriate education for children with disabilities. This could involve children spending some time within a mainstream school, studying with their non-disabled peers. Students also spend time in special classroom designed for the specific children with disabilities. Children are usually segregated along categorical groupings (Kasik, 2007).

iv) Political discourse of educating children with disabilities: The inherent political discourse of educating children with disabilities was a focus of chapter four. The decision about the education of children with disabilities was seen as a matter of political willingness and decision-making. Interestingly, the ruling party's philosophy influenced the government's decision. It is apparent in Bangladesh, that with each change in dominant political party, new policies are developed, with minimal attention to policy implementation. Change in the government brought change to the educational

decisions for children with disabilities. Gradually with changes in power and influences, Bangladesh has formulated a diverse range of policies designed to support the education of children with disabilities.

v) The dominant discourse for educating children with disabilities: As an influential global policy document, the UNCRPD (UN, 2006) has introduced a dominant discourse by being an influential global policy that is designed to influence member states to undertake various measures to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities. This dominant global discourse is based on the right to access and participate in education. Therefore as a result of the dominance of this discourse, Bangladesh has recently developed laws and formulated policies in reference to the provision of education for children with disabilities.

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